THE SECOND RUSSIAN ATTACK ON CONSTANTINOPLE

A. A. Vasiliev

Remember now firmly the words of my tongue;
The warrior delighteth in glory;
On the Gate of Byzantium the buckler is hung,
Thy conquests are famous in story.

The Lay of the Wise Oleg
by A. S. Pushkin *

* Translation by Thomas B. Shaw, in *The Works of Alexander Pushkin*, selected and edited, with an introduction, by Avrahm Yarmolinsky, New York, 1936.

FOREWORD

In 1946, in the Foreword to my book *The Russian Attack on Constantinople in 860*, I have explained why, dealing with a single episode, I have not confined myself to a mere article but have instead written a book. Although my *Second Russian Attack on Constantinople* is being published not in the form of a book but in the more modest shape of a monograph, the same question, however, may arise again, and I feel that to justify writing a monograph on such a subject I should allege my reasons. In this monograph I have the same aim and the same plan as in the previous book, i.e., to examine the attack in connection with the Viking incursions in Western Europe. Then, with the secondary works, as in my previous book, I have not limited myself to mere statements of titles or to a few words of summary, but I have reproduced exact quotations, having in view that these works are seldom at the disposal of the reader, and that many of them are written in Russian, a language which, unfortunately, for the time being is not generally known. I have also had to discuss several questions which are connected with the central subject of the study only indirectly, but which contribute to our better understanding and confirmation of the fact of the second Russian attack, which has been recorded in the Russian Chronicles only. Unfortunately I had no time to use and discuss the commentary on Oleg's campaign by D. S. Likhachev published in the second part of *"The Tale of Bygone Years"* (*Povest Vremennykh Let*), ed. by V. P. Adrianova-Peretz (Moscow-Leningrad, 1950), pp. 262–281 (in Russian).

I wish to tender my warm gratitude to Professors Sirarpie Der Nersessian and Milton V. Anastos, of Dumbarton Oaks, Harvard University, as well as to Mrs. Nathalie Scheffer, for their help and suggestions which have been of great value to my work. I express my warm thanks to Miss Lois Hassler, Assistant to the Librarian and to the Research Staff, who, with her usual conscientiousness, has revised my manuscript and corrected inadequacies in my English.

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INTRODUCTION

DURING the Middle Ages there were four Russian attacks on Constantinople. The first attack, in 860, was described by the Greek and Russian sources and set with chronological accuracy; the third attack under the Russian prince Igor, in 941, was recorded by Greek, Russian, Latin, and Arab sources, and even by the miniatures of the famous manuscript of John Skylitzes in Madrid; the fourth and last attack, conducted by Vladimir, the elderly son of the Russian prince Yaroslav the Wise, in 1043, was told by Greek, Russian, and Arab sources, and also by the miniatures of the above-mentioned manuscript of John Skylitzes. The story of the second attack, with which we shall deal, has survived only in the Russian annals in connection with the name of the Russian prince Oleg, and has come down to us in a rather legendary form, as it is told in these very valuable chronicles.

Like the first attack of 860, Oleg's campaign was indissolubly connected with the general course of European events in the ninth century and in the beginning of the tenth, and cannot be detached from the main European movement of that period. It was an episode in the process of the enormous destructive avalanche from the north which swept over Europe, when the Norsemen, Danes, Swedes and, to a lesser degree, Norwegians, harried the European countries both in the west and in the east. In the ninth century, as L. Halphen says, Ireland became a Norwegian colony, and England was well prepared to become a Danish colony.[1] At the same time, a considerable part of the western territory of present-day Russia became a Swedish colony, which had one center in the north, at Novgorod, and the other on the middle Dnieper, in the south, at Kiev. At the end of that century, the Varangian leader Oleg, of Novgorod, by capturing Kiev, united both north and south. The Scandinavian newcomers, Varangians, Vikings, were called in the Russian sources *Rus'* (the Russes), and this name was applied both to the state which they created and to the various tribes which they conquered. Oleg, owing to his successful military achievements, in the new surroundings, may be regarded as the real founder of the Russian state.

So, in the east, with the establishment of the Russian State in the ninth century, and the gradual subjugation of various Slavonic, Finnish, and other tribes, Viking activity was almost at an end within the confines of the new Principality. But, following their inborn piratical impulses, they embarked,

[1] L. Halphen, *Les Barbares des grandes invasions aux conquêtes turques du XI^e siècle* (Paris, 1926), ch. V: "L'Expansion scandinave aux neuvième et dixième siècles," p. 297.

in the tenth century, on a number of distant raids, originating in the new center and extending in the southeast to the shores of the Caspian Sea, and in the south to the shores of the Black Sea; there the maritime regions of the Byzantine Empire and the Capital itself, "the Guarded of God," Constantinople, lay open to the devastating inroads of the Varangians supported now by their new subjects. Although still adhering to a life and activity of mere adventure and plunder, the Vikings of that period were not deprived of trading interests and operations.

When in 911 Oleg's envoys in Constantinople, after the Russian raid, made peace and concluded a treaty with the Emperors Leo and Alexander, in the Far West, in the same year, the Emperor Charles the Simple, unable to oust the Northmen-Danes, who were led by the famous Dane, Rollo or Rolf, from the Seine basin, was forced to leave in their hands a considerable amount of territory on condition that they defend his kingdom, receive baptism, and do homage to him. This was the foundation of the Duchy of Normandy, the only permanent outcome of the Viking Age in France – an event of momentous importance for the future history of Europe. With the establishment of Normandy, Viking activity was practically at an end in the Frankish Kingdom.

Summing up, we always must keep in mind that Oleg's campaign or, more accurately, Oleg's raid, must be discussed not as a separate, individual event of minor significance but it must be studied against the background of the general European tragedy of that period, when, as I have said in the Introduction to my study on the first Russian attack on Constantinople, terrified and exhausted Europe was driven to despair and almost hopelessly uttered a new prayer: "Ab ira Normannorum libera nos, Domine!" Such a line of approach may justify, to some extent, my decision to write a special study on Oleg's campaign.

In 1840, F. Kruse published an article entitled "The Two First Inroads of the Russians into Byzantium." Such a title permits us to suppose that the second inroad should be that of Oleg. But for the first inroad Kruse took the event of the year 774, when the Emperor Constantine V Copronymus (741–775) had sailed against the Bulgars εἰς τὰ Ρούσια χελάνδια, i.e., in the red imperial vessels, and Kruse mistook the adjective ρούσιος meaning red for Russian; so that, from his point of view, the first Russian inroad into the Byzantine Empire had taken place in 774, and the second was that of Oscold (Ascold) and Dir "in 862, or, as Bayer thinks, in 864 and 865." [2]

[2] Theophanes, I, 446: (Κωνσταντῖνος) . . . εἰσελθὼν καὶ αὐτὸς εἰς τὰ 'Ρούσια χελάνδια . . . Anastasii *Chronographia Tripertita*, p. 295: et ingressus et ipse in rubea chelandia. In de Boor's edition the Greek adjective 'Ρούσιος is printed with a capital letter. F. Kruse, "The First Two

In this study I put aside the interesting Jewish mediaeval text on Khazaro-Russian-Byzantine relations in the tenth century, which was edited and translated into English in 1912, by S. Schechter. It mentions the name of "Helgu (Oleg), the King of Russia," and his unsuccessful expedition against Constantinople. Although edited and translated many years ago, the text still presents chronological and topographical difficulties, which have not been satisfactorily clarified, and which prevent me from using the document for my study.[3] In his lectures given in St. Petersburg in 1908–1916, in other words, immediately after the publication of the document, A. Presnyakov, after stating that Oleg is not a legendary but an historical figure, wrote: "His name and activities are confirmed by the two sources which are independent of annalistic traditions and combinations: by the treaties with the Greeks and by the recently found Jewish document"; and after telling its contents and recognizing its vagueness and uncertainty, he concludes that such a document cannot be rejected as a source.[4]

The period from the first Russian attack on Constantinople in 860 down to the beginning of the tenth century was marked by the active relations between Byzantium and the young Russian State of Kiev. They were of both

Inroads of the Russians into Byzantium," *Journal of the Ministry of Public Instruction*, XXVIII (1840), 149–170 (in Russian). See G. Finlay, *A History of Greece*, ed. by H. F. Tozer, II (Oxford, 1877), p. 87, n. 2: Theophanes' passage is remarkable for containing the earliest mention of the Russians in Byzantine history. For the explanation of Theophanes' passage see in B. Dorn–E. Kunik, "Caspia," *Mémoires de l'Académie des sciences de St.-Pétersbourg*, VII[e] série, XXIII (1877), 221–228 (in German); there is a Russian edition of *Caspia* (St. Petersburg, 1875), 364–371. Even in the twentieth century there are some scholars, who see in τὰ ῥούσια χελάνδια the Russian vessels; for instance, the Serbian historian St. Stanoyevich in 1908, the German Dr. Fritzler in 1923. See V. Moshin, "The Varangian-Russian Problem," *Slavia*, X (Prague, 1931), 131–132 (in Russian).

[3] S. Schechter, "An Unknown Khazar Document," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, new series, III (Philadelphia, 1912–1913), 181–219; the name of Helgu on pp. 217–218. Bibliography before the year 1928 in A. Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, I (Madison, 1928), p. 390, n. 36; French edition, I (Paris, 1932), p. 425. See also V. Parkhomenko, "On the Question about the Chronology and Life of the Annalistic Oleg," *Izvestiya (Accounts) Otdeleniya Russkago Yazyka i Slovesnosti Akademii Nauk*, XIX (1915), 220–236. *Idem.*, "When did Oleg the Wise Live?" (on the question of the authenticity of the Judeo-Khazar document of Cambridge), *Slavia*, XIV (Prague, 1936–1937), 170–171. In 1937, H. Grégoire considered the document as a fraud. "La légende d'Oleg, et l'expédition d'Igor," *Bulletin de la classe des lettres de l'Académie royale de Belgique*, XXIII (1937), 81, note. G. Ostrogorsky, "L'expédition du Prince Oleg contre Constantinople en 907," *Annales de l'Institut Kondakov (Seminarium Kondakovianum)*, XI (1939), 55, n. 21 and 22: Helgu cannot be identified with Oleg; Parkhomenko's speculations are arbitrary.

[4] Presnyakov's Lectures were published in 1938. A. E. Presnyakov, *Lectures on Russian History, I. Kievan Russia* (Moscow, 1938), pp. 69–71. More recently, see N. K. Chadwick, *The Beginnings of Russian History: An Enquiry into Sources* (Cambridge, 1946), pp. 40–50; see p. 41: the authenticity of the Cambridge fragment, i.e., of the above text, has given rise to much controversy, and the last word on the matter has not yet been spoken.

friendly and hostile character. Even in the time of Michal III (842–867), under whom the first attack had taken place, there were after it two Russian embassies to Constantinople. According to the circular letter of Patriarch Photius, which is ascribed to the spring or summer of 867, the cruel and blood-thirsty race, the so-called Rus, had changed their Hellenic and godless religion for the pure and unadulterated faith of the Christians, and had placed themselves under the protection of the Empire, becoming good friends instead of continuing their recent robbery and daring adventures.[5] These peaceable relations did not last very long. Evidently a conflict took place between Byzantium and Russia under Michael's successor, Basil I (867–886), who, about 874, by means of many precious gifts, made an agreement with the "most unconquerable and most impious people of the Russians" and concluded with them a treaty of peace.[6] This agreement may be regarded as the first treaty between Byzantium and Russia,[7] which, in all probability, ended their last conflict before the beginning of the tenth century.

NARRATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN ANNALS

Here follows the narrative of Oleg's expedition as it is described in the Laurentian and Hypatian redactions of the Russian Primary Chronicle. In the year 6415 (907) Oleg went against the Greeks. He took with him a multitude of the peoples who were under his rule: Varangians, Slavs, Chuds, Krivichians, Merians, Polyanians, Severians, Derevlians, Radimichians, Croats, Dulebians, and Tivercians, who are Turks. With this entire force, Oleg sallied forth by horse and ship, and the number of his vessels was two thousand. He arrived before Tsargrad, but the Greeks locked the strait (i.e., the Golden Horn) with the chain (Gretzi Zamkosha Sud) and closed up the city. Oleg disembarked upon the shore, and ordered his soldiers to beach the ships. They waged war around the city, and slaughtered many Greeks. They also destroyed many palaces and burned the churches. Of the prisoners they captured, some they beheaded, some they tortured, some they shot, and still others they cast into the sea. The Russes inflicted many other woes upon the Greeks after the usual manner of soldiers. Oleg commanded his warriors to

[5] See A. Vasiliev, *The Russian Attack on Constantinople in 860* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1946), pp. 229–230.

[6] Cont. Theoph., 342, c. 97: καὶ σπονδὰς πρὸς αὐτοὺς σπεισάμενος εἰρηνικάς. See Vasiliev, *The Russian Attack*, pp. 230–231.

[7] See F. Dölger, *Corpus der griechischen Urkunden des Mittelalters und der neueren Zeit.* Reihe A: *Regesten*, I (München und Berlin, 1924), No. 493 (p. 60), *ca.* 874(?). Also Baron Michel de Taube, *Rome et la Russie avant l'invasion des Tatars (IX–XIII siècle)*, I (Paris, 1947), pp. 30, 93, 129–130, 141.

make wheels which they attached to the ships, and when the wind was favorable, they spread the sails and bore down upon the city from the open country. When the Greeks beheld this, they were afraid and sending messengers to Oleg, they implored him not to destroy the city and offered to submit to such tribute as he should desire. Thus Oleg halted his troops. The Greeks then brought out to him food and wine, but he would not accept it, for it was mixed with poison. Then the Greeks were terrified, and exclaimed: "This is not Oleg, but St. Demetrius, whom God has sent upon us." So Oleg demanded that they pay tribute for his two thousand ships at the rate of twelve *grivni* [8] per man, with forty men reckoned to a ship.

The Greeks assented to these terms and prayed for peace lest Oleg should conquer the land of Greece. Retiring a short distance from the city, Oleg concluded a peace with the Greek Emperors Leo and Alexander, and sent into the city to them Karl, Farlof (Farulf), Velmud (Vermund), Rulav (Hrollaf), and Stemid (Steinvith),[9] with instructions to receive the tribute. The Greeks promised to satisfy their requirements. Oleg demanded that they should give to the troops on the two thousand ships twelve *grivni* per bench, and pay in addition the sums required for the various Russian cities: first Kiev, then Chernigov, Pereyaslavl, Polotzk, Rostov, Lyubech, and the other towns. In these cities lived princes subject to Oleg.

Then follows the text of the first document, which we shall discuss later, and the Annalist continues: "Thus the Emperors Leo and Alexander made peace with Oleg, and after agreeing upon the tribute and mutually binding themselves by oath, they kissed the cross, and invited Oleg and his men to swear an oath likewise. According to the religion of the Russes, the latter swore by their weapons and by their god Perun, as well as by Volos, the god of cattle, and thus confirmed the treaty.

"Oleg gave orders that silken sails should be made for the Russes and linen ones for the Slavs, and his demand was satisfied. The Russes hung their shields upon the gates as a sign of victory, and Oleg then departed from Tsargrad. The Russes unfurled their silken sails and the Slavs their sails of linen, but the wind tore them. Then the Slavs said: 'Let us keep our canvas ones; linen sails are not made for the Slavs.' So Oleg came to Kiev, bearing palls, gold, fruit, and wine, along with every sort of adornment. The people called Oleg 'the Sage' for they were but pagans, and therefore ignorant."

[8] *Grivna* was the old Russian equivalent of "pound"; the word originally seems to have meant a circular ingot of silver.

[9] Here I give the names of the Russian envoys in the form as they stand in the Russian original, and then, in parenthesis, in their Scandinavian forms as they have been given by the translator of the Laurentian redaction, Professor Samuel Cross.

This story was told in the annals under the year 6415. Then the Annalist resumes his narrative under the year 6420.

"Oleg despatched his vassals to make peace and to draw up a treaty between the Greeks and the Russes. His envoys thus declared: 'We of the Rus nation: Karly (Karl), Inegeld (Ingjald), Farlof (Farulf), Veremud (Vermund), Rulav (Hrollaf), Gudy (Gunnar), Ruald (Harold), Karn (Karni), Frelav (Frithleif), Ryuar (Hroarr), Aktevu (Angantyr), Truan (Throand), Lidulfost (Leithulf, Fast), Stemid (Steinvith), are sent by Oleg, Great Prince of Rus, and by the glorious boyars under his sway, unto you, Leo and Alexander and Constantine, great autocrats in God, Emperors of the Greeks, for the maintenance and proclamation of the long-standing amity which joins Greeks and Russes, in accordance with the desire of our Great Princes and at their command, and in behalf of all those Russes who are subject to the hand of our Prince.

" 'Our serenity, above all desirous, through God's help, of maintaining and proclaiming such amicable relations as now exist between Christians and Russians, has often deemed it proper to publish and confirm this amity not merely in words but also in writing and under a firm oath sworn upon our weapons according to our religion and our law. As we previously agreed in the name of God's peace and amity, the articles of this convention are as follows:

" 'First of all, that we make peace with you Greeks (Po pervomu ubo slovu da umirimsya s vami Greky), and love each other with all our heart and will, and as far as lies in our power, prevent any subject of our serene Princes from committing any crime or misdemeanor. Rather shall we exert ourselves as far as possible to maintain as irrevocable and immutable henceforth and forever the amity thus proclaimed by our agreement with you Greeks and ratified by signature and oath. May you Greeks on your part maintain as irrevocable and immutable henceforth and forever this same amity toward our serene Princes of Rus and toward all the subjects of our serene Prince.' "

Then the Chronicle reproduces a very lengthy excerpt of this treaty dealing with various stipulations concerning all kinds of damages and incidents occurring between Russians and Greeks, which are of minor interest for this study.

Here is the concluding part of the treaty: "As a convention and an inviolable pledge binding equally upon you Greeks and upon us Russes, we have caused the present treaty to be transcribed in the handwriting of Ivan upon a double parchment, bearing your Emperor's and our own signature,

to be promulgated and handed to our envoys in the name of the Holy Cross and the Holy and Indivisible Trinity of your one true God. According to our own faith and the custom of our nation, we have sworn to your Emperor, who rules over you by the grace of God, that we ourselves will neither violate, nor allow any of our subjects to violate the peace and amity assured by the articles thus concluded between us. We have also given to your government an identical document for the mutual ratification of the same convention in order to confirm and promulgate the treaty thus concluded between us this second of September, in the fifteenth indiction,[10] in the year from Creation 6420."

Then the Russian annalist describes the treatment of the Russian envoys in Constantinople by the Emperor after the signature of the treaty, and about their departure. "The Emperor Leo honored the Russian envoys with gifts of gold, palls, and robes, and placed his vassals at their disposition to show them the beauties of the churches, the golden palace, and the riches contained therein. They thus showed the Russes much gold and many palls and jewels, together with the relics of our Lord's Passion: the crown, the nails, and the purple robe, as well as the bones of the Saints. They also instructed the Russes in their faith, and expounded to them the true belief. Thus the Emperor dismissed them to their native land with great honor. The envoys sent by Oleg returned to Kiev, and reported to him all the utterances of both Emperors.[11] They recounted how they had made peace and established a covenant between Greece and Rus, confirmed by oath inviolable for the subjects of both countries.

"Thus Oleg ruled in Kiev, and dwelt at peace with all nations."

The Annalist concludes the story of Oleg with the very well-known legend of how he was bitten on the foot by a serpent who crawled forth from the skull of his dead favorite horse, so that in consequence he sickened and died.[12]

[10] In his English translation, Cross omits the last four words. In the original Old Slavonic text: a v nedelyu 15.

[11] At the beginning of this treaty, as we have seen above, the three Emperors are mentioned, Leo, Alexander, and Constantine. But the latter, born in 905 and crowned in 911, was still an infant; so that the negotiations were carried on with the two Emperors, Leo and Alexander.

[12] *The Russian Primary Chronicle or The Tale of Bygone Years* (*Povest Vremennykh Let*), ed. E. F. Karski (Leningrad, 1926), pp. 29–39 (the Laurentian redaction). I use here the English translation of the Chronicle by Samuel H. Cross, *The Russian Primary Chronicle* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1930), pp. 149–155. Cross' work was published in *Harvard Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature*, vol. XII, pp. 75–320. I use his translation, always comparing it with the Slavonic original. The First Novgorod Chronicle (Letopis) tells the story of Oleg's campaign upon the Greeks under the year 6438 = 922 A.D. See the recent

SOME REMARKS ON THE NARRATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN ANNALS

As we see from the above text, in the imagination of the Russian chronicler, there was an expedition on a large scale led by Oleg. In reality it was one of those raids which, beginning with the attack of 860, continued, with some interruptions, down to the tenth century. And the raid in which Oleg took part at the outset of this century has been transformed, in the Annalist's writing, into a great expedition composed of the representatives of many tribes, whose long catalogue is produced by the author, and some of whom were not under Oleg's rule. But, no doubt, some of the listed tribes took part in the raids of that period. The number of the boats — 2,000, if we compare it with 200 boats used for the attack of 860, may be accepted as a rather normal exaggeration. It is not to be forgotten that for the expedition of the Russian Prince Igor, in 941, the Byzantine sources give the fantastic figure of 10,000 boats. The striking inconsistency in the narrative of the Russian Annalist on Oleg's campaign is that this sea-borne expedition was amphibious, being composed of horse and ship. If we admit the presence of a horse, i.e., of an army, then we must ask by which route the Russian troops reached Constantinople. The obvious route was through the territory of the Bulgarian King, Symeon, implacable enemy of Byzantium. But from the treaty of 904, which fixed the boundary between Bulgaria and the Byzantine Empire, until the end of Leon's rule we do not hear of any collision between the two empires. Oleg's army therefore, if we admit the annalistic story, must have marched along the eastern shore of the Black Sea, through the Caucasus and across the northern regions of Asia Minor, a march, as R. Dolley writes, comparable only with Hannibal's crossing of the Alps but which the Russian chronicler accepts without comment.[13] May we see in this inconsistency a certain allusion to the Russian expeditions to the Caspian Sea which took place at the same period but about which we know from other sources, not from the Russian annals? The mention of the chain which barred the way into the Golden Horn and which had been used for the first time, in 717–718, against the Arabs who had laid siege to Constantinople, is a very well known historical fact.[14] The commonplace description of destruc-

edition of this chronicle by the Academy of Sciences of SSSR (Moscow-Leningrad, 1950), p. 108; 435; 515. The Ustug Chronicle (Letopisny Svod), the so-called Archangel Annalist, tells this story twice: under the year 6408 = 900 A.D. (*sic*) and under 6430 = 922 A.D. Ed. by K. N. Serbina (Moscow-Leningrad, 1950), pp. 21–22.

[13] R. H. Dolley, "Oleg's Mythical Campaign against Constantinople," *Bulletin des lettres et des sciences morales et politiques de l'Académie royale de Belgique*, 5e série, tome XXXV (1949), 119.

[14] The same device to bar the way to rivers or to gulfs by means of chains can be found in Scandinavian sources; it may have been borrowed by Scandinavians from the Greeks. See

tion and cruelties inflicted by the Russians upon the captured Greeks may easily refer either to the attack of 860 or to the expedition of Igor. The mention of the ships on wheels which were carried across Galata and launched on the Golden Horn may be explained by the Norman traditions in Western Europe, which reproduced the same stratagem. Once (in 1851) Fr. Kruse wrote: *hic loci res inaudita, Nortmannis consueta.*[15] The recent scholars who have been interested in this episode believe that it is time to reject completely the opinion owing to which the transport of Oleg's ships is nothing but a legend.[16] The obvious closest parallel to this episode is the Turkish attack on Constantinople in 1453. The Radzivil or Königsberg manuscript, of the Russian Chronicle written at the end of the fifteenth century, among its 617 miniatures, contains one reproducing ships with bird beaks which represent Oleg's approach to Constantinople in the ships put on wheels.[17]

Oleg's idea that food and wine offered to him were poisoned has also a parallel in West European sources. Saxo Grammaticus tells that the King Gori, during his travel in ulterior Biarmia had the same experience.[18] The story of Oleg's death from the bite of a serpent crawling forth from the skull of his dead horse reminds us of the story of the Norwegian hero Odde (Oddr), who spent the greatest part of his life in Russia, and died from the bite of a serpent in Norway.[19] From the chronicler's statement that the terrified Greeks exclaimed: "This is not Oleg, but St. Demetrius, whom God

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E. A. Rydzevski, "About the Annalistic Tradition of the Expedition of Rus on Tsargrad in 907," *Izvestiya (Accounts) of the Academy of Sciences of SSSR*, Section of the social sciences, 1932, 478–479 (in Russian).

[15] Fr. Kruse, *Chronicon Nortmannorum, Wariago-Russorum necnon Danorum, Sveonum, Norwegorum inde ab a. DCCLXXVII usque ad a. DCCCLXXIX . . . motisque geographicis, historicis, chronologicis, illustratum* (Hamburg and Gotha, 1851), p. 451. There is another edition of this book, absolutely identical, published in the same year (1851), at Dorpat (Estonia), where Kruse was professor. This edition, dedicated to the Emperor Nicolas I, was published at the author's expense.

[16] A. Lyaschenko, "The Annalistic Tales about the Death of Oleg the Wise," *Izvestiya Otdeleniya Russkago Yazyka i Slovesnosti of the Russian Academy of Sciences*, XXIX (1924), 283–285 (in Russian), Helene Rydzevski, "Die dänische Huno Sage und eine Episode aus der altrussischen Chronik," *Acta Philologica Scandinavica. Tidsskrift for nordisk Sprogforskning*, V (Copenhagen, 1930–31), 35. Ostrogorsky, *L'expédition du Prince Oleg*, p. 60.

[17] See D. V. Ainalov, "Essays and Notes on the History of the Early Russian Art," *Izvestiya Otdeleniya Russkago Yazyka i Slovesnosti Akademii Nauk*, XIII, 2 (1908), 322 (in Russian). On the number of the miniatures in the Radzivil manuscript, see D. S. Likhachev, *The Russian Annals and their Cultural, Historical Significance* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1947), p. 433.

[18] See Lyaschenko, *op. cit.*, pp. 282, 288.

[19] See Lyaschenko, *op. cit.*, pp. 263–267: The story was brought to Russia from Norway. Cf. F. R. Schröder, "Skandinavien und der Orient im Mittelalter," *Germanisch-romanische Monatsschrift*, VIII (1920), 215: it is very probable that the Varangian saga of Oleg was transferred in the West upon Oddr. N. K. Chadwick, *op. cit.*, pp. 25–26; appendix II, pp. 145–174: The Scandinavian Background: Oddr Vithförli (Örvar-Oddr).

has sent upon us," we may conjecture that this legend must have had its origin in the environment in which the veneration of St. Demetrius of Thessalonica was particularly strong; so that the legend might have come to the Annalist's mind either from Byzantium or from Bulgaria.[20]

In the list of the various cities for which Oleg demanded the Greeks to pay indemnity, Novgorod is not mentioned. This means that this city took no part in Oleg's campaign.

The story of the silken and linen sails has not been satisfactorily clarified; and the parallel from the Norwegian saga, referring to the King Olaf (995–1030), given by H. Rydzevski, is not convincing.[21] After the victorious campaign, Oleg, or, according to some versions of the chronicle, the Russian warriors in general, fixed their shields on the gates of Constantinople – the episode sung by the famous Russian poet Pushkin – as a sign of victory. This is not a legend. It is an old Norman custom when, in order to show that the war was over, the chief of the expedition fixed his shield on the wall of the city, or raised it, not as a sign of victory but as a sign of peace. The Russian chronicler either misunderstood his source or intentionally wished to enhance the glory of the victorious Oleg.[22] As a curiosity, I mention here that the Polish writer of the sixteenth century, M. Stryjkowski, claimed that, during his journey in Turkey in 1575, he had seen, among other antiquities, "with his own eyes," Oleg's shield hanging above the gates of Galata, opposite Constantinople.[23]

[20] See Ostrogorsky, *op. cit.*, p. 57. Dolley, *op. cit.*, p. 121 and n. 3.

[21] Rydzevski, *About the Annalistic Tradition*, pp. 473–477. Ostrogorsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 60–61. According to Dolley (p. 122), this story may mean nothing more than that the Byzantines gave rich cloths for the adornment of the sails of the leader's ships. See K. Tiander, *Voyages of the Scandinavians to the White Sea* (St. Petersburg, 1906), p. 405 (in Russian).

[22] See Ostrogorsky, pp. 58–59. Lyaschenko, pp. 285–288. Dolley, pp. 122–123. Among earlier writers, see Y. K. Grot, *From the Scandinavian and Finnish World (1839–1881). The Works of Y. K. Grot, I* (St. Petersburg, 1898), p. 894 (in Russian).

[23] M. Stryjkowskiego, *Kronika polska litewska, żmódzka i wszystkiéj Rusi*, I (Warsaw, 1846), p. 116: A ten podobno herb albo scit, między inszymi dawnościami, . . . jam sam tymi wlasnymi oczyma widzial roku 1575, nad bramą Galataką przeciw Konstantinopolowi, po staroświecku malowany, wiozące się . . . See H. Rydzevski, *Die dänische Huno-Sage*, p. 40. A. V. Solovyov, "Vladimir the Saint as described by a Polish Historian of the Sixteenth Century," *Vladimirsky Sbornik 988–1938* (Belgrade, 1939), 201–202 (in Russian). The story about Oleg's shield reminds me of another episode in Byzantine history which has no connection whatever with this study. In 813, according to the chronicle of Theophanes, the Bulgarian King, Krum, laid siege to Constantinople and asked the Emperor Leo V, the Armenian, to allow him "to fix his lance on the Golden Gate"; the Emperor refused, and Krum returned to his camp. *Theophanes*, ed. de Boor, vol. I, p. 503 (Bonn, 785). *Anastasii Chronographia Tripertita*, ed. de Boor, p. 340. I do not understand why Ostrogorsky, justly criticizing Stender-Petersen's book in general, rather angrily remarks that he has a peculiar idea of comparing Oleg's shield with Krum's lance which the latter wished to drive into the Golden Gate.

The Chronicler gives correctly the names of the emperors under whom the agreements were made. Under the year 907, Leo (886–912) and Alexander (886–913), the two joint emperors-brothers, are mentioned; and dealing with the second document the chronicler gives the names of the three emperors, Leo, Alexander, and Constantine. Since Leo VI died on May 11, 912, and Constantine, Leo's son, the future Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, was crowned as co-emperor on June 9, 911, and since the treaty was dated the second of September, it is clear that it was concluded in September, 911. In this particular case, the chronology of the Russian annals is correct.

The honors which were bestowed upon the Russian envoys after the signature of the treaty do not differ from the honors granted the representatives of other foreign countries. But one peculiarity of this treatment is to be pointed out. In the chronicle we read that the envoys were also instructed in the Christian faith. Referring to this passage, Dolley calls attention to a significant coincidence with the narrative of an Arabian writer of the twelfth century, Marvazi, who says that the Rus became Christians during the year 300 of the Hegira, that is, A.D. 912–913; and here Dolley remarks that it is surprising that modern scholars seem to have overlooked the coincidence of Marvazi and Nestor, i.e., the Russian annalist. But the editor, translator, and commentator of Marvazi, V. Minorsky, states that Marvazi's dating "300/912" is wrong, the second and the third figures having been omitted, because the Russians were baptized A.D. 988 or 989 (378–379 of the Hegira).[24]

I say again that Oleg's campaign was not an expedition undertaken on a large scale, as it is described in the Russian Annals, but it was one of the raids which were so usual, both in the west and in the east, in the ninth century and at the outset of the tenth. But it is possible that the raid which was conducted by Oleg himself was one undertaken with more ships than were used on ordinary raids, so that we may call it a raid (not an expedition) on a large scale.

Ostrogorsky, *op. cit.*, p. 59, n. 34 (probably by misprint, he writes *dans le Corne d'Or*). See Ad. Stender-Petersen, "Die Varägersage als Quelle der altrussischen Chronik," *Acta Jutlandica*, VI, 1. *Aarsskrift for Aarhus Universitet*, VI (Kopenhagen, 1934), 94.

[24] Dolley, *Oleg's Mythical Campaign*, pp. 128–129 and n. 1, to p. 129, V. Minorsky, *Sharaf al-Zaman Tahir Marvazi on China, the Turks and India.* Arabic text (*circa* A.D. 1120), with an English translation and commentary (London, 1942), p. 36; Arabic text, p. 23, l. 7; commentary, p. 118. G. Vernadsky, *Kievan Russia* (New Haven, 1948), p. 62: according to Marvazi, the Russians first became Christians A.H. 300; that is, A.D. 912–913. On Marvazi we shall speak later. See N. K. Chadwick, *The Beginnings of Russian History*, p. 70: according to Marvazi, the "Rus" had become Christians in the year 923 (*sic*).

THE HISTORICAL EVIDENCE ON OLEG'S RAID

The most essential ground upon which several scholars deny Oleg's raid on Constantinople is the fact that this event has not been recorded in the Byzantine sources. It is true that the description of this raid, supplied with many legendary adornments which certainly reflect Varangian-Scandinavian customs and legends, has been preserved in the Russian Annals alone. It has been taken for granted that the name of the Russian prince Oleg, who led the raid, has come down to us also through the Russian chronicles only, if we put aside the vague evidence given by the Hebrew document edited by Schechter. But I think that it is a striking exaggeration to say that Oleg's raid has left no trace whatever in the Byzantine tradition. If one avows this, it would mean that either he has overlooked the Byzantine evidence, or he has embarked on the study of this question with the preconceived idea that Oleg's raid had never taken place. Now I hope also to show that the name of Oleg and a mention of his fight against Byzantium have survived in a contemporary Arab source, which has never been taken into consideration in this particular respect.

LEO THE DEACON

The most important allusion to Oleg's raid and to the treaties concluded by him is found in the famous history of Leo the Deacon. I may regard Leo's passage as direct evidence for the historicity of the event under consideration which, although having been familiar to many scholars for a long time, has not received due consideration. The statement we are referring to is the threat to the Russian Prince Svyatoslav which Leo the Deacon puts into the mouth of the Emperor John Tzimisces: "I hope you have not forgotten the defeat of your father Igor, who, *having scorned the sworn agreements*, came by sea to the imperial city with a great army and numerous vessels, in order to reach the Cimmerian Bosporus with barely ten embarcations to announce his own disaster." [25]

I wish to bring forward here the names of several scholars who were dealing with the above passage. In 1829 a German historian, Wilken, emphasizing the vagueness of Leo the Deacon's statement, thought it possible to refer this allusion either to the treaty concluded by Basil I with the Rus-

[25] Leo the Deacon, VI, 10 (Bonn, 106): *οἶμαι γάρ σε μὴ λεληθέναι τὸ τοῦ σοῦ πταῖσμα πατρὸς Ἴγγορος, ὅστε τὰς ἐνόρκους σπονδὰς παρὰ φαῦλον θέμενος, σὺν μεγάλῳ κινήματι καὶ μυρίοις σκάφεσι κατὰ τῆς βασιλευούσης ἐκπλεύσας, μόλις σὺν δέκα λέμβοις εἰς τὸν Κιμμέριον ἀφίκετο Βόσπορον, αὐτάγγελος τῶν οἰκείων γεγονὼς συμφορῶν.*

sians, which we have mentioned above, or to an unknown treaty by Igor himself. Since we have the two official documents in the Russian Primary Chronicle, dated from the beginning of the tenth century, it is out of place to go back to the year circa 874, when Basil's treaty was made. Wilken's hypothesis concerning Igor's unknown treaty is to be discarded.[26]

Ernst Kunik mentioned Leo the Deacon's text in 1845 and 1874.[27]

In 1870, A. Rambaud, referring to Leo the Deacon's passage, wrote that it is the only text in the whole Byzantine literature which may allude to a treaty with Oleg.[28]

In 1916 a Russian historian, M. Sozyumov, after emphasizing that Leo the Deacon was well informed about Russia, wrote that it may be supposed that he was aware of Oleg's campaign and his treaty on which all the Byzantine sources are so stubbornly silent. And then, after producing the above passage from Leo, he writes: "What oaths did Igor violate? We shall scarcely be mistaken in admitting in Leo the Deacon's words an allusion to Oleg's treaty." [29]

In 1928, I myself, after quoting Leo the Deacon, wrote that these "sworn agreements" made with the Byzantine Empire before Igor's time must have been the agreements of Oleg reported by the Russian chronicler.[30]

In 1949, Dolley wrote: "Some settlement between 860 and 941 seems to be implied in a most important allusion in Leon Diakonos, quoted by Professor Vasiliev but apparently overlooked by Professor Ostrogorsky and Professor Vernadsky." [31] To Dolley's words I must add that the text of Leo's has also been overlooked by Professor H. Grégoire.[32]

In Leo the Deacon we must acknowledge a reference to Oleg's treaties which is an undeniable trace of the survival of Oleg's campaign or raid in the Byzantine evidence.

[26] Wilken, "Ueber die Verhältnisse der Russen zum Byzantinischen Reiche in dem Zeitraume vom neunten bis zum zwölften Jahrhundert," *Abhandlungen der historisch-philologischen Klasse der K. Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin*, 1829, pp. 93–94.

[27] Ernst Kunik, *Die Berufung der schwedischen Rodsen durch die Finnen und Slawen*, II (St. Petersburg, 1845), p. 446. *Idem*, *On the Report of the Toparchus Gothicus* (St. Petersburg, 1874), p. 87 (the latter study in Russian).

[28] A. Rambaud, *L'Empire Grec au dixième siècle. Constantin Porphyrogénète* (Paris, 1870), p. 374, n. 1.

[29] M. Sozyumov, "On the Sources of Leo the Deacon and Skylitzes," *Vizantiskoe Obozrenie* (*Revue Byzantine*), II (Yuryev, 1916), p. 165. The whole article, pp. 106–166 (in Russian).

[30] A. Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, I (Madison, 1928), p. 389; French edition (Paris, 1932), I, pp. 424–425; Spanish edition (Barcelona, 1946), I, p. 397. In Russian, I (Petrograd, 1917), p. 294. See N. K. Chadwick, *op. cit.*, pp. 10–11.

[31] R. H. Dolley, *Oleg's Mythical Campaign*, p. 125.

[32] About Grégoire's article see below.

MASUDI

Now I wish to turn to an Arab writer, Masudi, whose evidence referring to our question has never been pointed out.

The Arab historian and geographer, Masudi, of the tenth century, was a contemporary of the events which are discussed in this study. He was not only a writer but also an indefatigable traveler. Born in Baghdad, he traveled in Persia in 915, in India as far as Ceylon in 916, in the China Sea, Zanzibar and Oman. Then we find him traveling along the southern shore of the Caspian Sea and in 926 in Palestine. In 943 he visited Antioch and the Syrian frontier towns; in 945 he was in Damascus, and in 947 and 955 at Fustat, in Egypt, where he died in 956 or 957. From this brief sketch of his travels we see that he was well acquainted with the Near East and that he visited the shores of the Caspian Sea just at the time of the Russian raids in that region. As we shall mention below, he described the Russian attack and capture of Barda'a, the prosperous city on the western shore of the Caspian Sea, in 912–913. He not only might, but must, have had firsthand information about the Russians of that period, and his data about the Slavs (al-Saqalibah) must be taken into serious consideration. Here I have in mind his work "The Golden Meadows" (*Murudj-az-Zahabi*).

In my book *The Russian Attack on Constantinople in 860* (Cambridge, 1946, pp. 177–178), I used Masudi's work, in which, in my opinion, he mentions the name of the Russian leader, Dir, writing that "the first among the kings of the Slavs was the King al-Dir, who possesses vast cities and many cultivated lands. Muhammedan merchants go to his capital with various kinds of merchandise." Then Masudi proceeds, "Afterward this King of the Slavs was succeeded by the King Alawang (Alawandj). He possesses vast cultivated lands, numerous troops, and many military resources. He fought the Greeks, the Franks, the Nokabard, and other peoples. And the war between them had various chances." [33]

According to the Russian Annals, Dir's successor in Kiev was Oleg. And if we attentively examine the distorted name Alawang, we shall find in it the necessary letters to restore the real name of Oleg. And Masudi gives some precious information that this Prince Alawang-Oleg fought the Greeks; in other words, the Arab contemporary writer confirms Oleg's campaign on Constantinople. It is also interesting to point out that in the distorted form

[33] Maçoudi, *Les Prairies d'Or*. Texte et traduction par C. Barbier de Meynard et Pavet de Courteille, III (reprint, Paris, 1917), p. 64 (chapter XXXIV). In their translation, the French editors and translators erroneously take *Dir* and *Alawang* for the names of peoples, saying "le roi *des* Dir" et "le roi *des* Awandj."

Alawang we discover the name of the Russian Prince not in the Scandinavian form Helgi but in its Slavonic form Oleg, which Masudi evidently heard from the Russian troops during his travels on the shores of the Caspian Sea. Unfortunately the French editors fail to give any variants to this name from the manuscripts used, which were several.[34] Setting aside the question as to who were the two other peoples with whom Alwang-Oleg was at war, the Francs and the Nokabard, I wish to point out that in the name of Nokabard, in my opinion, it is absolutely inadmissible to see, in this particular case, the Lombards, as the French translators do, and as the Arab geographers dealing with Western Europe call the Lombards. May this distorted form suggest the city of Νεμογαρδάς, as it occurs in the *De Administrando Imperio* of Constantine Porphyrogenitus? [35]

After writing the above passage, Masudi says that the detailed description and the classification of the Slavs, according to his own plan, should not have been discussed in this work; and, a few lines below, he adds that the story of all these events would be too long to relate, the more so as we have already told them in detail in our works, *The Historical Annals* and *The Middle History*.[36] It is a great pity that these two works, if I am not mistaken, have not yet been discovered. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, a sheik of Cairo told the British traveler Burckhardt that he had seen a copy of the first work, in twenty odd volumes, at the Library of the Mosque of St. Sophia, in Constantinople. But this copy so far has not been found.[37] We may suppose that these two works, which are still unknown, contain many new and important data about Slavs and Russians.

[34] See their *Variantes et notes*, III, p. 448, where p. 64 is not mentioned. There are two Egyptian editions of Masudi's work "The Golden Meadows," one published at Bulaq, in 1283 (1866), the other in Cairo, in 1313 (1895). I had in my hands the Bulaq edition in which, instead of the name *Alawang*, of the French edition, stands *Alafrang*, i.e., the Franc (I, 196, l. 12). In his book *Stories (Skazaniya) of the Moslem writers on the Slavs and Russians* (St. Petersburg, 1870), p. 137, A. Harkavi reproducing Masudi's text in a Russian rendering calls the King "King Avandja" and gives variants *Arfandja, Ifrandji, Frandji*. These variants give something like "Franc," as in the above Bulaq edition, which has no sense, because the same text, a line below, mentions that this king fought the Franks.

[35] *De administrando imperio*, 9; Bonn, 74; Moravcsik-Jenkins, p. 56. This name is usually identified with the city of Novgorod. But now, in connection with some recent archaeological discoveries and geographical nomenclature, there is an attempt to interpret this name as the city lying on the river Niemen, something like "Niemengrad," which is closer to the Greek name Νεμογαρδάς. See Baron Michel de Taube, *Rome et la Russie avant l'invasion des Tatars*, I (Paris, 1947), pp. 111–112.

[36] Maçoudi, III, pp. 64–65.

[37] V. J. L. Burckhardt, *Travels in Nubia*, sec. ed. (London, 1822), p. 481. A. Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes, I. La dynastie d'Amorium* (Bruxelles, 1935), p. 327. But see C. Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*, Erster Supplementband (Leiden, 1937), p. 220: printing (of this work) is planned at Haidarabad (in India). Nothing new in the second edition of Brockelmann's *Geschichte der arabischen Litterature* (Leiden, 1943), I, p. 151.

My attempt to discover the name of Oleg in Masudi's work "The Golden Meadows" is not a groundless hypothesis. I regard his text as a fact recorded by a contemporary writer who was well acquainted with the Near East. His record is direct contemporary evidence, which should put an end to the doubts on the historicity of Oleg's raid on Constantinople, as well as, of course, to the vain speculation that Oleg as a person never existed.

MARVAZI

Another source which, in my opinion, indubitably has in view Oleg's raid is the testimony of an Arab geographer, Marvazi, who compiled his work *circa* A.D. 1120.[38] Referring to this writer, Dolley writes: "The best that the pro-Nestorians can produce is a vague reference in Marvazi – who wrote two hundred years later – to the effect that on one occasion the Russians reached Constantinople *in spite of the chains of the gulf*. Since the chains of the gulf seem to have been a permanent feature of the defences of Constantinople, the reference may just as well be to the attack of 860." [39] If we read Marvazi's statement, as it is reproduced by Dolley, the latter's opinion may seem to be rather plausible. But if we read the entire passage of Marvazi in the middle of which are found the lines cited by Dolley, our opinion will be different. The text runs as follows: "The Russians are strong and powerful men, and go on foot into far regions in order to raid; they also sail in boats on the Khazar Sea (i.e., the Caspian Sea), seizing ships and plundering goods. They sail to Constantinople in the Sea of Pontus, in spite of the chains of the gulf. Once they sailed into the sea of Khazar and became masters of Barda'a for a time. Their valour and courage are well known, so that any one of them is equal to a number of any other nation. If they had horses and were riders, they would be a great scourge to mankind." [40] Here the Russian raids on Constantinople are mentioned in connection with the Russian raids on the Caspian Sea, which started at the beginning of the tenth century; in other words, it is absolutely permissible to admit that the Russian raids upon Constantinople, or, generally speaking, on the coastal regions of the Empire, took place also at that time.

It is true that Marvazi compiled his work about 1120; but he used several earlier written sources, and among them a source of the highest importance, the geographical work of the Samanid minister, Abu 'Abdallah Muhammad ben Ahmad Jayhani, in the earlier part of the tenth century, written in

[38] V. Minorsky, *Sharaf al-Zaman Tahir Marvazi on China, the Turks and India.* Arabic text (*circa* A.D. 1120) with an English translation and commentary (London, 1942).

[39] Dolley, pp. 113–114.

[40] Marvazi, p. 36; the Arab text at the end of the book, p. *23, 15–21.

Bukhara between 892 and 907 (279–285), i.e., he was a contemporary writer of the Russian raids of that period. His *opus magnum* is lost, but traces of it have survived in many geographical works, especially those written in Khorasan.[41]

For one reason or another, the beginning of the tenth century was full of the military activities of the Russians, whose raids devastated the shores of the Black Sea in the south, and owing to the weakness and decadence of the Khazar State, the western shores of the Caspian Sea. Oleg's raid was one of the episodes of those military adventures.

The Russian raids in the Caspian Sea were most successful. In 912–913 the Russians took possession of Barda'a, the most prosperous city on the western shore of the Caspian Sea, "the Baghdad of the Caucasus," according to Maqdisi (Muqadassi); a large and very pleasant town where the seat of the king of that province was situated, according to a Persian geographer of the end of the tenth century.[42] Referring to the same event, the Armenian historian of the tenth century, Moses Kaghankatvatsi, wrote: "At the same time (in 914) a savage and alien people, Ruzik, struck from the north; like a whirlwind they spread all over the Caspian Sea as far as the capital of Aghvania, Partave (Barda'a). It was impossible to resist them. They devastated the city and took possession of all the goods of its residents. (The ruler of that country), Salar, laid siege to them, but could not inflict any harm on them, because they were invincible. Then, the women of the city using craft began to poison the Ruz; but they being aware of this treason pitilessly exterminated women and children, and after staying in the town six months utterly devastated it. Then, like cowards, they went to their country with much booty." [43] This was the first appearance of the Russians

[41] Minorsky, p. 6. W. Barthold, in V. Minorsky, *Hudud al-'Alam*, "The Regions of the World" (London, 1937), pp. 23–24. C. Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*, sec. ed., I (Leiden, 1943), p. 262. According to recent information, there is a Jayhani Manuscript in Kabul (Afghanistan). But this is only an abridged translation of the work of Jayhani from Arabic to Persian. See R. Frye, "New Islamic Sources of the Rus," *Byzantion*, XVII (1946–1948), 123–125.

[42] On the capture of Barda'a in 912–913, Maçoudi, *Les Prairies d'Or*, texte et traduction par Barbier de Meynard et Pavet de Courtreille, II (Paris, reprint, 1914), p. 24. On Maqdisi, A. Yakubovsky, "Ibn-Miskaveikh on the Expedition of the Rus to Barda'a in 332 = 943/4," *Vizantisky Vremennik*, XXIV (1923–1926), 79. V. Minorsky, *Hudud al-'Alam. The Regions of the World. A Persian Geography 372 A.H.–982 A.D.* Translated and explained by V. Minorsky (London, 1937), p. 143 (§ 36, 21). N. K. Chadwick, *op. cit.*, pp. 50–58.

[43] *A History of the Aghvans* by Moses Kaghankatvatsi, writer of the tenth century, translation from Armenian by K. Patkanyan (St. Petersburg, 1861), pp. 275–276 (in Russian). On this writer see Manuk Abeghyan, *History of the Early Armenian Literature*, I (Erevan, 1948), pp. 390–391 (in Russian). The Armenian text of Kaghankatvatsi was published in Tiflis, 1912. The above Kaghankatvatsi passage has been reproduced in French by B. Dorn-Kunik, *Caspia*,

on the shores of the Caspian Sea, and the first seizure of Berda'a by them. The second time the Russians took possession of Berda'a in 943 A.D. and this campaign was described by the Arab historian of the eleventh century, Ibn-Miskaveikh.[44]

I have lingered over the Russian expeditions in the Caspian Sea because they produce interesting parallels to the Russian raids in the Black Sea and help us to understand better the latter as component parts of the general Russian stormy move (*Drang*) south and southeast in the first half of the tenth century. The seizure of Barda'a in 912–913 was the result of a raid, like Oleg's raid at the same time, about 907. It was the period when the Russians did not act in well organized expeditions, but in mere raids for booty and contribution to be paid. Such were the Russian raids on the territory of the Byzantine Empire at the outset of the tenth century, one of which has been connected by the Russian Chronicles with the name of Oleg. The second capture of Barda'a in 943–944 was the result of a very well organized military undertaking, whose aim was to penetrate into the interior of the country and to seize the most prosperous town of the Caucasus.[45] This was the event contemporary with the expedition of the Russian Prince Igor, which was also a great military undertaking but which ended in complete failure.

In his commentary on Marvazi, Minorsky wrote: "According to the Russian Chronicle, when the Russians led an attack against Constantinople A.D. 907, the Greeks locked the Gulf and closed up the city. Marvazi possibly refers to this event of which Jayhani was a contemporary." [46]

Mémoires de l'Académie Impériale des Sciences de Saint-Pétersbourg, VII[e] série, XXIII (1877), 286; also p. 2 (in German). There is also the Russian edition of *Caspia* (1875). Recently A. Yakubovsky has given this passage in Russian, *op. cit.*, p. 71; and N. K. Chadwick has repoduced it in English, *op. cit.*, p. 55; the latter author calls the Armenian historian Moses of Kalankatuk. The attempt of the Barda'a women to poison the Russian invaders reminds us of the story told in the Russian Annals, how the Greeks brought out poisoned food and wine to Oleg.

[44] The Arab text of Ibn-Miskaveikh in *The Eclipse of the Abbasid Caliphate*, ed., translated and elucidated by H. F. Amedroz and D. S. Margoliouth, II (Oxford, 1921), pp. 62–67; in English, V (Oxford, 1921), pp. 67–74. In Russian by Yakubovsky, pp. 64–69. The English reproduced from Margoliouth's translation by N. K. Chadwick, *op. cit.*, appendix I, pp. 138–144. See F. Westberg, "On the Analysis of Oriental Sources on Eastern Europe," *Journal of the Ministry of Public Instruction*, February, 1908, 385–386 (in Russian).

[45] See V. Barthold, in Yakubovsky's above-mentioned study, p. 92.

[46] Minorsky, Marvazi, p. 120. Vernadsky cites Minorsky's opinion without expressing his own point of view on the subject. *Kievan Russia* (New Haven, 1948), p. 27. Dolley calls Minorsky's opinion "very guarded" (*op. cit.*, p. 114, n. 3). In his rather negative judgment concerning Marvazi's evidence, Dolley (p. 113) emphasizes the fact that he wrote two hundred years later. But the English writer has overlooked the fact that Marvazi's source was Jayhani, a contemporary of the Russian events.

We must regard Marvazi's data as a very precious source on the Russian raids in the Black Sea in the beginning of the tenth century, and consequently on the raid of Oleg.

LEO THE WISE

Then there is a contemporary Greek source, which if adequately interpreted gives us extremely valuable information on the Russian raids on the territory of the Byzantine Empire at the very beginning of the tenth century: it is the Τακτικά written by the Emperor Leo the Wise himself (886–912) at the outset of the tenth century; particularly the section on maritime battles (Περὶ Θαλασσομαχίας Ναυμαχικά) is of extreme importance for us.[47] The treatise which is addressed to the chief of the navy (ὁ στρατηγὸς τῆς ναυτικῆς δυνάμεως) consists of eighty-three paragraphs; paragraph seventy-eight, which is particularly interesting for us, runs as follows: "Thou shalt equip small and large vessels (δρόμωνας) according to the character of the hostile peoples. For, the barbarian Saracens and the so-called northern Scythians do not use the same sort of ships. The barbarians (i.e., Saracens) use larger and slower vessels (κουμβάρια) and the Scythians smaller, lighter, and faster boats (ἀκάτια), because getting into the Black Sea through the rivers they cannot use bigger ships." [48] Of course, under the name of northern Scythians, Leo meant Russians. A Byzantine general of the end of the tenth century and also the author of a *Tactica*, Nicephorus Uranus, paraphrasing Leo's above paragraph, wrote: "Make small and large vessels (*dromons*) according to the character of thy fighting peoples. The Saracens have not the same fleet; they have larger and slower vessels (μπάδια); but the Russians

[47] Alphonsus Dain, *Naumachica partim adhuc inedita in unum nunc primum congessit et indice auxit A.D.* (Paris, 1943). See p. 10: Leo VI wrote one of his *Tacticae Constitutiones*, i.e., the nineteenth, Περὶ Θαλασσομαχίας, at the beginning of the tenth century. Dolley says that it was written in the summer of 905 (p. 110), only two years before the Russian attack supposedly took place. In his study Dolley fails to produce reasons for such an important dating.

[48] Dain, Λέοντος Βασιλέως Ναυμαχικά, c. 78 (p. 32): Μικροὺς δὲ καὶ μεγάλους δρόμωνας κατὰ τὴν ποιότητα τῶν πολεμίων ἐθνῶν κατασκευάσεις. Οὐ γὰρ ὁ αὐτός ἐστιν στόλος τῶν πλοίων τῶν τε Σαρακηνῶν βαρβάρων, καὶ τῶν λεγομένων βορείων Σκυθῶν. Οἱ μὲν γὰρ κουμβαρίοις χρῶνται μείζοσι καὶ ἀργοτέροις, οἱ βάρβαροι, οἱ δὲ οἷον ἀκατίοις ἐλάττοσι καὶ ἐλαφροτέροις καὶ ταχινοῖς, οἱ Σκύθαι, διὰ ποταμῶν γὰρ εἰς τὸν Εὔξενον ἐμπίπτοντες πόντον οὐ δύνανται μείζοσι χρήσασθαι πλοίοις. Dain says (p. 16) that he edits this treatise for the first time (*nunc primum edere mihi datur*). But exactly the same text was cited in 1845 by E. Kunik, *Die Berufung der schwedischen Rodsen*, II, p. 392. Apparently Kunik used (see p. 381, note) *Aeliani et Leonis Imp. Tactica* (Lugduni Batavorum, 1613). I have not seen this edition, which Dain, if I am not mistaken, fails to mention.

(Ῥῶσοι) have smaller, lighter, and faster boats (ἀκάτια), because they cross the rivers and then enter the Black Sea." [49]

Leo's paragraph, written, according to Dolley, in 905, gives a wonderful picture of Russian raids at the end of the ninth and at the outset of the tenth century. One of these raids, led by Oleg, evidently took place about 907, or, if Dolley's dating is correct, between 905 and 907.

LEO CHOIROSPHAKTES

We might expect to find some indications of Oleg's raid in the correspondence of Leo Choirosphaktes, an eminent contemporary diplomat, who at the end of the ninth century and at the very beginning of the tenth, had been sent by the Emperor Leo VI on three successful missions to Symeon of Bulgaria, and later, in the winter of 904–905, was charged with a mission to the Caliph in Baghdad, where he remained two years. On his return to Constantinople he fell into disgrace and was exiled to the distant fortress of Petra. Unfortunately we are not certain of the exact date of his downfall and exile. Since there is no evidence of Oleg's raid in his letters, we may suppose that he was already in exile in 907. In his correspondence I have discovered only one mention of the Russians, whom he calls by the usual term of that period, Scythians. In his letter XXI (XVI) addressed, about 910, from Petra to the Emperor, he complained how badly he was treated by his guards, saying that some of them were more Scythian than the northern barbarians.[50] It is very probable that Choirosphaktes used these words as a current slogan of that period associated with the Russian cruelty in general; but it also might have been a certain repercussion of Oleg's raid which was accompanied with much cruelty and violence.

CONSTANTINE VII PORPHYROGENITUS

Further indirect evidence in favor of the historicity of Oleg's raid comes from Constantine Porphyrogenitus' valuable work, the *De administrando imperio*, which was written and compiled, as we know from internal evidence, between the years 948 and 952.[51] At that time the author, born in 905 and crowned on June 9, 911, was between forty-three and forty-seven

[49] A. Dain, *Naumachica, Nicephori Urani Tacticae caput 54*, c. 70 (pp. 86–87). On Nicephorus Uranus and his paraphrase of Leo's *Tactica*, see A. Dain, *La "Tactique" de Nicéphore Ouranos* (Paris, 1937), pp. 40–46; 133–144.

[50] Καὶ οἱ μὲν βορείων βαρβάρων πάντως σκυθικώτεροι. Georges Kolias, *Léon Choerosphactès magistre, proconsul et patrice* (Athens, 1939), p. 103. The Scythians mentioned in the letter XIX (XXV) are Bulgarians (p. 95). S. G. Mercati, "Intorno all'autore del carme εἰς τὰ ἐν Πυθίοις θερμά (Leone Magistro Choirosphaktes)," *Rivista degli studi orientali*, X (Rome, 1923–1925), p. 223. Cf. R. H. Dolley, *Oleg's Mythical Campaign Against Constantinople*, p. 112.

[51] J. B. Bury, "The Treatise De administrando imperio," *Byz. Zeitschrift*, XV (1906), 522–523.

years old. The work is a sort of political testament, a manual of kingcraft addressed to his youthful son Romanus, "the Emperor crowned of God and born in the purple." It contains a precious mine of information for Byzantine foreign policy, diplomacy, history, geography, and the general structure of the Empire. It is not to be forgotten that the treatise is a contemporary source for the Russo-Byzantine relations in the tenth century.

For us the opening chapters of the work are of extraordinary significance. They deal with the nomadic people of Turkish origin Pechenegs (Patzinaks) and with the Russians. For the first time we realize how important it was for both Byzantium and Russia to be at peace with the Pechenegs. The imperial author writes: "I perceive that it is always greatly to the advantage of the emperor of the Romans to be minded to keep the peace with the nation of the Pechenegs and to conclude conventions and treaties of friendship with them and to send every year to them from our side a diplomatic agent (ἀποκρισιάριον) with presents befitting and suitable to that nation, and to take from their side sureties, that is, hostages (ὁμήρους, ἤτοι ὄψιδας) and a diplomatic agent, who shall come, together with the competent minister, to this city protected of God, and shall enjoy all imperial benefits and gifts suitable for the emperor to bestow." [52]

Then, after explaining the importance of the peaceful relations with the Pechenegs for Byzantium, the author turns to the relations between the Pechenegs and the Russians. He writes: "The Russians are also much concerned to keep the peace with the Pechenegs. For they buy of them horned cattle and horses and sheep, whereby they live more easily and comfortably, since none of the aforesaid animals is found in Russia. Moreover, the Russians are quite unable to set out for wars beyond their border unless they are at peace with the Pechenegs, because while they are away from their homes, they may come upon them and destroy and outrage their property. And so the Russians, both to avoid being harmed by them and because of the strength of that nation, are the more concerned always to be in alliance with them and to have them for support, so as both to be rid of their enmity and to enjoy the advantage of their assistance." [53] Then comes the passage which refers to our question: "Nor can the Russians come to the imperial city of the Romans, either for war or for trade, unless they are at peace with the Pechenegs." [54]

[52] *De administrando imperio*, I, 1; Bonn, 67–68; a new edition by Moravcsik with an English translation by R. J. H. Jenkins (Budapest, 1949), pp. 48–49. I am using here Jenkins' fine translation.

[53] *De adm. imp.*, I, 2; Bonn, 69–70; Moravcsik-Jenkins, 48–51.

[54] *De adm. imp.*, I, 2; Bonn, 69; Moravcsik-Jenkins, 51.

Then, in my opinion, the most important chapter for our study, entitled "Of the Pechenegs and Russians and Turks," runs as follows: "So long as the emperor of the Romans is at peace with the Pechenegs, neither Russians nor Turks can come upon the Roman dominions by force of arms, nor can they exact from the Romans large and inflated sums in money and goods as the price of peace, for they fear the strength of the nation which the emperor can turn against them while they are campaigning against the Romans. For the Pechenegs, if they are leagued in friendship with the emperor and won over by him through letters and gifts, can easily come upon the country both of the Russians and of the Turks, and enslave their women and children and ravage their country." [55]

The above texts clearly show that the Russian raids on the territory of the Byzantine Empire in the tenth century entirely depended on the relations of Russia with the Pechenegs; if the Russians were at peace with their dangerous and harassing neighbor, their raids in the south were possible and effective; they did not aim at conquests or occupation of the Byzantine territory; but ravage and booty were the characteristic feature of those flash raids. When Constantine Porphyrogenitus writes that the Russians cannot come to the imperial city, either for war or for trade, unless they are at peace with the Pechenegs, he does not write here about his own theoretical speculations but he means that, when the Russians were at peace with the Pechenegs, they *did* come to the imperial city either for war or for trade. When the imperial author says in the last-named text that, so long as the emperor is at peace with the Pechenegs, the Russians cannot come upon the Roman dominions by force of arms, nor can they exact from the Romans large and inflated sums in money and goods as the price of peace, he alludes in those lines to cruel realities when the Russians did come upon his dominion by force of arms and did exact from the Romans large and inflated sums in money and goods as the price of peace. These texts are the most valuable confirmation of the Russian raids in the beginning of the tenth century; and "the large and inflated sums in money and goods exacted as the price of peace," mentioned by Constantine Porphyrogenitus, perfectly agree with Oleg's exorbitant demands which are indicated in the Russian annals. It is not surprising that Oleg's name is not given by the Byzantine chronicles. This earlier ruler of the young Russian Principality was entirely unknown, by name, among the population of the Empire, just as Askold and Dir, the leaders of the first attack on Constantinople in 860, had been unknown by name at that time. According to the Russian annals, Oleg's name was re-

[55] *De adm. imp.*, I, 4; Bonn, 70; Moravcsik-Jenkins, 50–53.

corded in the Slavonic version of his treaty with the Emperors; this means, of course, that his name occurred also in the Greek text of the document, which has not been preserved. But such official documents were kept in the offices of the department of Foreign Affairs and were inaccessible to the population as a whole. The modern Russian historian, B. D. Grekov, after citing the text of the *De administrando imperio*, rightly concludes: "This is a picture of real life. One has here in view not one or another campaign of Russia upon Byzantium, but the whole system of the Russo-Byzantino-Pecheneg interrelations." [56]

In another work compiled under the supervision of Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Cerimoniis aulae byzantinae* there is a text which, in my opinion, refers to Oleg's treaty. This compilation gives a detailed description of the composition of the great maritime expedition which was organized against Crete, Cyprus, and the coast of Syria, in 910, under the command of Himerius. For us it is extremely interesting to learn that, among many other members of this expedition, there were 700 Russians. In 1902 I connected the appearance of the Russians in the Byzantine fleet in 910 with the provision of the treaty of 911, owing to which the Russians had the right of being enlisted in the imperial army; in my opinion, this provision should have been fixed in the previous agreement of 907 and was included again in the treaty of 911. If my speculations are correct, the Russian detachment in the expedition of Himerius made its appearance only because of the above-mentioned provision of the treaty, which was the direct result of Oleg's campaign against Constantinople. In 1939, G. Ostrogorsky, referring to my study, wrote that the Ceremonial Book, which mentions the Russian warriors in the Byzantine army in 910, confirms in indubitable manner the information of the Russian chronicle.[57]

THE RHOS (ROS) — DROMITAI

Now we shall consider the famous passage in the chronicle of Pseudo-Symeon which has been translated and interpreted many times, from the seventeenth century, when Combefis appended his Latin translation to the Greek text of the above chronicle, down to the year 1949, when R. J. H. Jenkins published his brief but stimulating article. In spite of the efforts of so many scholars of various countries, the above passage, in its middle sec-

[56] B. D. Grekov, *Kievan Russia*, 4th edition (Moscow-Leningrad, 1944), p. 261 (in Russian).

[57] A. Vasiliev, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the time of the Macedonian Dynasty*, I (St. Petersburg, 1902), pp. 166–167 (in Russian). G. Ostrogorsky, "L'expédition du prince Oleg contre Constantinople en 907," *Annales de l'Institut Kondakov (Seminarium Kondakovianum)*, XI (1939), 53–54.

tion, still remains an undecipherable enigma; but the rest of the passage is very clear and must be taken into serious consideration by all those who are interesed in Oleg's raid. It is to be remembered that the mysterious passage is inserted in the Chronicle just in the place where the author, following the chronological order of events, i.e., the time from 904 to 907, should have related or at least mentioned Oleg's raid. Vasilievsky wrote that some allusion to the fact that the Byzantines had information about Oleg's campaign may be seen only in the chronicle of Symeon Magister (whom we now call Pseudo-Symeon), in the above passage.[58]

Here follows the passage from Pseudo-Symeon's chronicle: *Ῥῶς δέ, οἱ καὶ Δρομῖται, φερώνυμοι ἀπὸ Ῥῶς τινος σφοδροῦ διαδραμόντες ἀπηχήματα τῶν χρησαμένων ἐξ ὑποθήκης ἢ θεοκλυτίας τινὸς καὶ ὑπερσχόντων αὐτούς, ἐπικέκληνται. Δρομῖται δὲ ἀπὸ τοῦ ὀξέως τρέχειν αὐτοῖς προσεγένετο. ἐκ γένους δὲ τῶν Φράγγων καθίστανται.*[59]

The obscure part of this passage begins with the word *διαδραμόντες* and ends with the words *ὑπερσχόντων αὐτούς*.

Here is the Latin translation of the seventeenth century made by Combefis for the Greek text of the chronicle; it fails to help us to a better understanding of the text: "Russi, qui et congruo rei nomine Dromitae nuncupantur, a Ros quodam viro forti, cum sive monitu ac consilio sive divino quodam afflatu ac oraculo, pro potestate illis utentium eisque superiorum, iniurias noxamque evasissent, dicti sunt." [60]

In 1741, after criticizing Combefis' translation, T. S. Bayer gave his own Latin translation which is not very clear either: "Rossi (iidem qui Dromitae) vocabulo dicti sunt, quod ortum habet a Ros, id est, gravi et vehementi

[58] V. Vasilievsky, *The Life of St. George of Amastris*, *Works*, III (St. Petersburg, 1915), p. cxxviii, n. 1. The former edition of this *Life* was published by Vasilievsky in 1893. Against Vasilievsky, Laehr (see below); Grushevsky, *History of Ukraine-Russia*, I (Lwow, 1904), p. 386, n. 1 (in Ukrainian). Stritter cites this text under the year 884. "Memoriae populorum, olim ad Danubium, Pontum Euxinum, Paludem Maeotidem, Caucasum, Mare Caspium, et inde magis ad Septentriones Incolentium, e Scriptoribus Historiae Byzantinae erutae et digestae" a Ioanne Gotthilf Strittero, II (Petropoli, 1774), pp. 966–967.

[59] Symeon Magister, Bonn, p. 707. Here I wish to reproduce the identical text of the Continuer of Theophanes and the Continuer of George Hamartolus, telling the story of Igor's campaign on Constantinople in 941: *οἱ Ῥῶς κατὰ Κωνσταντινουπόλεως μετὰ πλοίων χιλιάδων δέκα, οἱ καὶ Δρομῖται λεγόμενοι, οἱ ἐκ γένους τῶν Φράγγων καθίστανται.* Theoph. Cont. VI, 39 (p. 423). Cont. Hamartoli, ed. Muralt, p. 841; Istrin, *The Chronicle of George Hamartolus in a Slavo-Russian translation*, II (Petrograd, 1922), p. 60 (Greek text). The words *ἐκ γένους τῶν Φράγγων* are translated into Old Russian: from the Varangian nation (*ot roda*). As we see, the middle section of the above passage has been omitted in these texts, because it refers to a different, earlier period.

[60] Pseudo-Symeon, p. 707.

sono, quem sive ex condicto, sive jussu aliquo deorum edunt contra hostem, cum superior bello est." [61]

In 1845, Ernst Kunik published his German translation of the passage, full of interrogation points, which shows that the above passage was not clear to him. Here is Kunik's translation: "Die Rôs, welche auch Dromiten heissen, haben ihren Namen von einem gewaltigen (?) Rôs erhalten, nachdem (weil?) sie den Feindseligkeiten (? wörtlich den Misshälligkeiten) derer entgangen waren, welche einen Götterspruch (?) oder ein Orakel eingeholt (?? sich zu Nutze gemacht ???) und über sie ein Uebergewicht erlangt (sie besiegt?) hatten." [62]

At the very end of this book, in the additional note to this passage, Kunik, referring to the words Ῥῶς σφοδρὸς, remarked: "One may think here of Oleg, because since his time the region of Kiev, which was particularly known to the Greeks, received the name *Rus*." [63]

In 1862, a Russian historian, S. A. Gedeonov, one of the strongest opponents of the theory of the Norman origin of Russia, gave his own paraphrase of the above text, which as we see at once, does not correspond to the original Greek. We read: "The Russians, who are also Dromitai, have been called by their name after a certain valiant Rus, after they had succeeded in saving themselves from the yoke of the people, who had taken possession of them and oppressed them, through the will or predestination of the gods." [64]

Despite the obscurity of the middle part of the passage under consideration, it is clear that it fails to deal with the Russians, who were to be liberated from the yoke of the people, who possessed and oppressed them. Such an idea does not occur in the Greek text. Gedeonov rejects Kunik's attempt to adjust this text to the story of the calling of the Varangians from beyond the sea, from Scandinavia, as we read in the Russian Annals. From Gedeonov's point of view, this story which bears the triple character of mystery, remoteness, and marvel, cannot be referred to an historical, almost contemporary event. The identification of the people-oppressor, the liberator of the

[61] T. S. Bayer, "Origines Russicae," *Commentarii Academiae Scientiarum Petropolitanae*, VIII, ad annum MDCCXXXVI (Petropoli, 1741), 405–406. *Idem, De Varagis, Opuscula ad historiam antiquam, chronologiam, geographiam, et rem numariam spectantia*: edidit Christ. Adolphus Klotzius (Halle, 1770), pp. 353–354.

[62] E. Kunik, *Die Berufung der schwedischen Rodsen*, II (St. Petersburg, 1845), pp. 412–413.

[63] *Op. cit.*, p. 496 (the last page of the book).

[64] S. A. Gedeonov, *Fragments from the Studies on the Varangian Question.* Appendix (Prilojeniye) to the first volume of the *Accounts (Zapiski) of the Academy of Sciences* (St. Petersburg, 1862), No. 3, p. 78. In 1876, there was published an individual edition, in 2 vols., under the title *Varangians and Rus. An Historical Study*, II, p. 479. On Gedeonov see V. A. Moshin, "Varyago-Russian Question," *Slavia*, X (Prague, 1931), 361–363 (in Russian).

Ros, and the period to which the mysterious tradition refers are impossible to discover, but there is no doubt that the passage fails to refer to Rurik and Oleg. Perhaps to the Avar yoke? Or to a certain very old event which is absolutely unknown to us? In any case the tradition, which had been brought in to the Greeks in the time of Oleg, and perhaps even in the time of Askold, has derived the name of the people of Rus (Ros) and the name of the country of Rus not from the Swedish *Rodsi*, who never existed, but from the local Slavonic name of *Rus*.[65]

The most detailed discussion on the above text of Pseudo-Symeon belongs to the noted Russian byzantinist, F. I. Uspensky whose article, written in Russian in 1890, is practically unknown outside Russia.[66] For this reason I wish to enlarge upon his study in some detail. According to Uspensky, the passage about the Ros in the Chronicle of Symeon Magister has no connection with his writing and, consequently, is an insertion. The essential peculiarity of this insertion consists in the fact that it is deprived of annalistic character and has two distinguishing qualities: (a) the etymological explanation of the names and places involved, and (b) the mythological reminiscences which serve in addition to the etymology. Since the etymology of the word *Ros* has been settled in a very simple manner (from a certain mighty Ros), and the classical mythology failed to produce material fitting this new name, the author of the passage under consideration turned to the old popular legendary traditions which contained supernatural and miraculous elements, with which Byzantium was amply supplied. Uspensky thinks that the passage about Ros, which we read with Symeon Magister, has its explanation in the reminiscences which have not been preserved by the Byzantine Annals. Traces of such reminiscences are seemingly found in the popular tradition about the magician, the sorcerer who had relations with the unclean spirits, and possessed supernatural qualities like the Patriarch John the Grammarian (832–842), who was accused of having devoted himself to the study of the forbidden sciences. And after mentioning the name of the Patriarch John, Uspensky says that he is rather sure that his own association of the story of John's charms with Symeon's passage about the Ros is not a fruitless guess, because the passage involved, which could not

[65] Gedeonov, *op. cit.*, pp. 77–79.

[66] F. Uspensky, "Patriarch John VII the Grammarian and the Rus-Dromitai with Symeon Magister," *Journal of the Ministry of Public Instruction*, 1890, January, pp. 16–34. A part of this article is included in Uspensky's later study, "The First Pages of the Russian Annals and Byzantine Vagrant Legends," *Accounts (Zapiski) of the Odessa Society of History and Antiquities*, XXXII (Odessa, 1914), 199–228. I used also an offprint of this article with special pagination. See also his *History of the Byzantine Empire*, II, 1 (Leningrad, 1927), pp. 322–323.

be explained, may have a satisfactory meaning, if, for its interpretation, we start not with the idea of the material domination of certain people over Rus (Russia) but with the action of supernatural forces.

After giving a brief biography of Patriarch John, Uspensky returns to our passage. Giving in a Russian translation the thirteenth chapter of Symeon Magister (pp. 705–707), which contains a long list of place names, including the passage about the Ros, Uspensky concludes that the latter must not and cannot be explained from Symeon's text because it does not belong to him. Uspensky takes our passage without any changes, as it occurs in the printed text, and confines himself to the explanation of individual words, which, as he says, cannot be found even in the best Greek dictionaries. He takes the word *ἀπηχήματα* in the sense of *reaction, influence.* Turning to the word *χρησάμενα* (*ἀπηχήματα τῶν χρησαμένων*), Uspensky says that this word meaning an *oracle* must be replaced by some term fitting the Christian conception of the writer who, in speaking about the Rus, used a pagan term. So the writer using this term must have meant a "manifestation of some supernatural power, – divine or demoniac." Then the word *ὑποθήκη*, in our passage, means *magic, sorcery* brought in by the unclean spirits, and *θεοκλυτία*, admission of some disaster through the will of God or with the help of the name of God.[67] The author of the passage does not dare ascribe the disaster to one or the other influence; consequently, in that reminiscence, which was in his mind, there were no clear indications of the participation of the will of God; in other words, Rus escaped such disasters as were not directly connected with religious ideas. As to the last words of the passage, *ὑπερσχόντων αὐτούς*, which remained unclear to Kunik, it is more correct not to think of the material domination of someone over Russia, but to hold to the abstract ideas of the Greek original and to explain these words from the same admission of disasters or charms of which we have spoken above. The disasters which had been inflicted upon Russia by the will of God or by sorcery affected her; they cost her some privations, which are indicated in the last words of the text.

Russia escaped and we must understand this in the literal sense – i.e., she left the arena, where the power which had affected her could still act, and hurriedly changed her place; therefore she was called *dromitai.* And here Uspensky gives his own tentative translation: "Rus, the famous *Dromitai,* are called after a certain mighty Ros, having escaped the charms

[67] On *θεοκλυτία* see E. A. Πεζοπούλου "Ἀθησαύριστοι Λέξεις," Βυζαντίς, II, 1 (Athens, 1911–1912), 130: *θεοκλυτία, auditio Dei, vox divina,* with reference to Oecumenius in *Apocal.*, ed. Cramer. *Catenae graecorum patrum in Novum Testamentum* edidit J. A. Cramer, Tomus VIII (Oxford, 1844), 208.13; 218.19.

(disasters) which had been allowed by God, or sent by the unclean spirits, and which possessed her." [68]

The reason why this passage has remained unique in literature and has not been repeated either by the writers contemporary with Symeon Magister or by those who used him later may be explained by the interpolative nature of the passage, which had not been included in all the versions of Symeon's chronicle, or by the fact that other writers were not aware of the occasion which served as a foundation for Symeon's speculations concerning Russia.

I put aside here Uspensky's attempt to connect our passage with the tradition about Patriarch John VII the Grammarian, who was accused of practicing sorcery and magic, and see in these legends traces of the Byzantine tradition about the pre-Rurik Russia.

I have dwelled rather long on Uspensky's study because it is almost unknown outside Russia, although it fails to deal directly with the questions of Oleg's campaign. In other words, his lengthy and rather vague discussion on the mysterious passage does not clarify the latter from the standpoint of the history of the outset of the tenth century. And it is not to be forgotten that in criticizing Kunik's tentative translation, Uspensky overlooked his additional note at the end of his work, which I have noted above, that under the Ῥῶς σφοδρός one may think of Oleg.

In 1949, R. J. H. Jenkins published a brief but very important paper on the evidence of Pseudo-Symeon concerning the question of the Rhos (Ros) *Dromitai*.[69] It is the first attempt to study attentively the long list of various places mentioned by Pseudo-Symeon, in connection with the events of the first years of the tenth century. The first part of the list, having the parallel passage in the account of the Continuer of Theophanes, refers to the Saracen attack conducted by Leo of Tripoli, who in 904 sacked Thessalonica.[70] In this list, Pseudo-Symeon gives *only* the names of the places and the explanatory comments upon them, without showing how they fit into the story of Leo of Tripoli's attempt on the capital. In other words he gives the trimmings without the story. But immediately following the list of place-names connected with the Saracen attack, Pseudo-Symeon appended another list of place-names, "again with archaeological or explanatory comment but again without a story." This second list, which has come down to us in

[68] Patriarch John VII the Grammarian and Rus-Dromitai, 23. The First Pages of the Russian Annals and Byzantine Vagrant Legends, 206–207; offprint, 10–11.

[69] R. J. H. Jenkins, "The Supposed Russian Attack on Constantinople in 907: Evidence of the Pseudo-Symeon," *Speculum*, XXIV (July, 1949), 403–406. He does not know Uspensky's above-mentioned Studies.

[70] Symeon Magister, 705–706. Cont. Theophan., 367.

Pseudo-Symeon's chronicle only, contains the above passage including *the Ros (Russians), also called Dromitai.* This string of place names is, according to Jenkins, the story of a Russian voyage to Constantinople, or, more probably, a raid on that city. It therefore looks quite conceivable that the supposed raid of 907 has been meant in this passage. His own tentative rendering of the passage runs as follows: "The Russians . . . having perused the oracular sayings, given either in the way of counsel or from divine inspiration, of those who had got the mastery over them. . ." Since the Greek of this passage is far from clear, its rendering into any other language cannot be clear either. Jenkins asks: "What were these 'divinely inspired oracles' of the Russian chiefs? Is this not possibly a reference to the powers of divination of Oleg the Wise? Is the 'Ρῶς τις σφοδρός Oleg himself?" The same hypothesis had been advanced in 1845 by Kunik: "one may also think of Oleg." [71] I myself may advance the same hypothesis in 1951.

The study of the "Russian" list of place names by Jenkins is a very essential step forward in the clarification of Oleg's raid; he gives a new foundation for proving that Oleg's raid is not a fairy tale or saga but a real historical fact, which has left a trace at least in one of the Byzantine chronicles.

THE ORIGIN OF THE TERM DROMITAI

The reason why Russians were called Dromitai is, of course, neither because they can run fast, as it is indicated in Pseudo-Symeon's Chronicle (707), nor because they *hurriedly* left the arena where they could still be affected by some mysterious powers, according to F. Uspensky's rather hazy speculations (see above, p. 191). Their designation as Dromitai derives from the name of a place which was situated at the mouth of the river Dnieper, whence Russians were setting out on their piratical inroads in the Black Sea. This was a long narrow stretch of land or rather of shore, which has been known from ancient times as the Ἀχιλλέως δρόμος, or Achilles' race course.

Full information about the sources on and the history of the Ἀχιλλέως δρόμος is found in an old detailed and very fine monograph published in French in 1826 by the Russian academician, H. K. E. Koehler, under the title "Mémoire sur les îles et la course consacrées à Achille dans le Pont-Euxin." [72]

[71] E. Kunik, *Die Berufung der schwedischen Rodsen,* in the additional chapter to this book (495), which as we know has been overlooked by Uspensky as well as by Jenkins.

[72] *Mémoires de l'Académie Impériale des Sciences,* série V, tome X (St. Petersburg, 1826), 531–819; text, 531–716; notes and citations, 717–819. On Koehler's work and publications see H. K. E. Köhler's *Gesammelte Schriften,* ed. by L. Stephani, VI (St. Petersburg, 1853),

It is very interesting to note that the cult of one of the most famous heroes of Greek mythology, Achilles, as the sea deity (*Pontarches*), was widespread along the shores of the Black Sea. In addition to the Ἀχιλλέως δρόμος the most celebrated of his local cults was connected with the lonely shrine in the island of Leuke (White Island or Achilles' Island), opposite the mouth of the Danube. Achilles' chief temple was situated in the city of Olbia, at the mouth of the river Hypanis (now Bug). Some other places in the basin of the Black Sea connected with the name of Achilles have been indicated by ancient writers and carefully studied by Koehler in his above-mentioned monograph.[73]

For this study the record of the Byzantine geographer, Stephanus Byzantius, is of great value. This in all probability was written in the time of Justinian the Great, in the sixth century; among other geographical names referring to Achilles, Stephanus Byzantius specifies Ἀχιλλέως δρόμος, which he erroneously calls an island; but he supplies us with extremely important information: that the name for one who inhabits the Ἀχιλλέως δρόμος can be Ἀχιλλειοδρομίτης.[74]

The stretch of the Ἀχιλλέως δρόμος being very low and therefore subject to inundations, in all probability, has never been inhabited; so that, according to Koehler, the Ἀχιλλειοδρομίται of Stephanus Byzantius were the inhabitants who had established themselves on the *terra firma*, i.e., on the shore opposite the drome.[75]

According to legendary traditions, this place has received the name of

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pp. v–viii. See Tomaschek's brief articles Ἀχιλλέως δρόμος and Ἀχιλλέως ἄλσος in Pauly's *Real-Encyclopädie*, I (Stuttgart, 1894), col. 221. J. Kulakovsky, *The Past of Tauris*, sec. ed. (Kiev, 1914), 10 (in Russian). Both writers fail to mention Koehler's monograph.

[73] Professor F. Bruun, of Odessa, rejected Koehler's opinion that, in the island of ancient Borysthenis, now Berezan, at the mouth of the Dnieper, he had discovered some archaeological remains connected with Achilles. See F. Bruun, "On the Site of Tyras," *Accounts (Zapiski) of the Odessa Society of History and Antiquities*, III (Odessa, 1853), 64. *Idem*, "Chernomorye. A Collection of the Studies on the Historical Geography of South Russia," I. *Accounts (Zapiski) of the University of Novorossiya*, XXVIII (Odessa, 1879), 103 (both in Russian). See Koehler, pp. 633–634.

[74] Stephani Byzantii Ethnicorum quae supersunt: Ἀχίλλειος δρόμος, νῆσος μετὰ τὴν Ταυρικήν . . . τὸ ἐθνικὸν Ἀχιλλειώτης καὶ Ἀχιλλείτης δύναται εἶναι καὶ Ἀχιλλειοδρομίτης. In Stephanus' three editions the text is identical. Ed. A. Berkelii et Th. de Pinedo, I (Leipzig, 1825), pp. 98–99; ed. A. Westermann (Leipzig, 1839), 68; ed. A. Meineke, I (Berlin, 1849), 152. The best study on Stephanus Byzantius (Byzantinus) is that of E. Honigmann, Pauli-Wissowa, *Real-Encyclopädie*, Zweite Reihe, III, A (Stuttgart, 1929), coll. 2369–2399 (under Justinian the Great, col. 2372). See also W. von Christ-W. Schmid-O. Stählin, *Geschichte der griechischen Litteratur*, 6 ed.; II, 2 (München, 1924), 1084–1085, § 836 (in the sixth century). K. Krumbacher, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Litteratur*, sec. ed. (München, 1897), 254 (probably in the fifth century).

[75] Koehler, *op. cit.*, p. 554; 619.

the δρόμος, because Achilles, seeking for his beloved Iphigenia in Scythia, had passed this stretch of land; or as Pliny says, this place was called "the Race-course of Achilles," because it was his exercising ground.[76]

I think that the name of Ἀχιλλειοδρομίτης pointed out by Stephanus Byzantius gives us the right solution to the origin of the term *Ros Dromitai*, who started their piratical raids in the Black Sea from the mouth of the Dnieper.[77]

FALSE RUMOR ABOUT A CONSTANTINOPOLITAN INSCRIPTION

In 1875, Vasilievsky wrote that in one of the issues of the Greek Journal published in Constantinople, Ὁ ἐν Κωνσταντινουπόλει Ἑλληνικὸς Φιλολογικὸς Σύλλογος, he had read an interesting account that, on the walls of Constantinople, there had recently been discovered an inscription referring to Oleg's campaign. And then Vasilievsky added: "An acquaintance with this inscription would perhaps be profitable both for those who consider Oleg's campaign a fairy tale, as well as for those who are indignant over such an infringement upon the Russian Annals." [78] Of course, this was nothing but a rumor without any foundation, and Vasilievsky has never mentioned it again.

OLEG'S CAMPAIGN IN RUSSIAN LITERATURE

POSITIVE ARGUMENT: OLEG'S CAMPAIGN IS AN HISTORICAL FACT

Historians of Russia. The great majority of Russian scholars regard Oleg's campaign as an historical fact. Here I wish to give the names of several of them beginning with the eighteenth century. As it is to be expected, most

[76] Koehler, *op. cit.*, p. 552–553. See Pliny, *Natural history*, IV, 12, 83: "exercitatione ejusdem (i.e., Achilles) cognominata Dromos Achilleos." The Loeb Library, II, 180.

[77] Long ago, Vasilievsky and Tomaschek had been of the same opinion. V. Vasilievsky, *The Life of George of Amastris*, *Works*, III (Petrograd, 1915), CCLXXX–CCLXXXI (the first edition of this study was published in 1878). Tomaschek, Ἀχιλλέως δρόμος, in Pauly's *Real-Encyclopädie*, I (Stuttgart, 1894), col. 221. In 1930, G. Laehr was also of this opinion (see below). By oversight, in his edition of an Old-Russian version of the chronicle of George Hamartolus and his Continuer as well as in the Greek text of the latter, V. M. Istrin, dealing with Igor's attack on Constantinople, referred the word *dromitai* not to the *Ros* but to the πλοῖα — ships; so that in his Greco-Slavic and Slavo-Greek vocabularies the word δρομῖται is identified with the Old-Russian word *skedi*, which is the Greek word σχεδία (σκεδία) meaning *raft, float*. V. Istrin, *The Chronicle of George Hamartolus in an Old-Slavo-Russian Version*, III (Leningrad, 1930), p. 57, 318.

[78] V. Vasilievsky, "The Varangian-Russian and Varangian-English Company (druzhina) in Constantinople," *Journal of the Ministry of Public Instruction*, part CLXXVII (1875), p. 440, n. 1. This note has been reproduced in its entirety in the new and revised edition of his works, I (St. Petersburg, 1908), 277, n. Of course, nothing like this can be found in *Die Landmauer von Konstantinopel.* Zweiter Teil. Aufnahme, Beschreibung und Geschichte von B. Meyer-Plath und A. M. Schneider (Berlin, 1943). *Archäologisches Institut des Deutschen Reiches. Denkmäler antiker Architektur*, Band 8.

of them tell the story as it is related in the Russian Annals, which they supply, not very often, however, with their personal remarks. M. V. Lomonosov (1711–1765), after narrating the story of the campaign and telling the contents of the treaties, concluded: "So both sides established peace. Oleg, hanging his shield on the gates of Tsargrad as a sign of victory, sailed back to Russia, with much booty. The simple and superstitious people called him a magician, because his deeds were regarded as impossible for a man." [79]

V. N. Tatishchev (1686–1750), who published his voluminous *Russian History* under Catherine the Great (1762–1796), telling the usual story of the campaign remarked: "The Greeks, as a people more crafty than valiant, took into their minds to do evil and sent Oleg and his troops poisoned food." He accepts the two treaties: preliminary and final.[80]

Prince M. M. Shcherbatov (1733–1790), in his *Russian History*, after telling the story and discussing the treaties, wrote: "Before his departure back to Kiev, Oleg, taking his shield, upon which a riding warrior was represented, hung it on the gates of Galata, in Constantinople, as a sign and memory of his victory." [81]

In her *Accounts Concerning Russian History*, the Empress Catherine the Great (1762–1796), narrating Oleg's campaign "on the Greek Empire (*derjava*)" in 907, wrote: "He had taken many cities; but when he approached Constantinople, its inhabitants spread the heavy iron chain across the Bosphorus and closed the passage. . . After the signing of the treaty, Oleg had a meeting with the Constaninopolitan Emperor, and both sides confirmed the peace by oath. Writers relate that at his departure Oleg left in Tsargrad as a memory the shield of Igor (*sic*), upon which a riding warrior was represented; and this shield, as they say, may be seen even now on the gates of Galata in Constantinople." The treaty was ratified on Monday, September 15, 912.[82]

The leading Russian historian of the first half of the nineteenth century, N. M. Karamzin (1766–1826), dealing with the question of Oleg's campaign, reveals his acquaintance with Byzantine historiography. He knows

[79] M. Lomonosov, *Early Russian History from the Beginning of the Russian People to the Death of the Grand Prince Yaroslav the First or to the Year 1054* (St. Petersburg, 1766), pp. 62–64.

[80] V. N. Tatishchev, *Russian History from the Earliest Times*, II (Moscow, 1773), pp. 18–24.

[81] Prince M. Shcherbatov, *Russian History from the Earliest Times*, I (St. Petersburg, 1901), pp. 281–294. This is a reprint of the original edition of 1771. The author makes references to his sources; one of them was the above-mentioned Polish historian Stryjkowski.

[82] Catherine the Second, *Accounts (Zapiski) concerning Russian History. Works of the Empress Catherine the Second*, edited by A. N. Pypin, VIII (St. Petersburg, 1901), pp. 31–35.

that in 902 seven hundred Russians, or the Varangians of Kiev, served in the Greek fleet (see above, p. 187). In 906, it was not only a maritime expedition; Oleg also took the infantry and cavalry. And here Karamzin asks whether the inhabitants of Bessarabia and the strong Bulgarians let him pass through in a friendly manner. The Russian Annalist does not speak about this. After telling the usual story, Karamzin concludes: "In this way Nestor describes the happy and glorious campaign, with which Oleg crowned his military deeds. Greek historians are silent as to this important event." And in note 316, referring to the text just mentioned, he writes that Leo the Grammarian, Symeon Lagothete, the Continuer of Constantine, George the Monk, Cedrenus, Zonaras, the same sources which tell about the Russian attack in 866 and 941, say nothing about Oleg's campaign. But is it to be concluded, asks Karamzin, that the event which they failed to describe must have been an invention? No. (1) The Byzantine historians from 813 to 959, as Bayer remarks, are not detailed; (2) not all Byzantine chroniclers have come down to us; (3) what is lacking in the chronicles which are known to us, may be found in those which are lost; (4) Skylitzes, Cedrenus, Zonaras call Saint Vladimir the brother-in-law of Basil and Constantine, but they do not say anything as to when and how the Russian Prince married Anne. Could the annalist, who lived in the eleventh century, invent an occurrence of the tenth century, which was still fresh in popular memory? Could he daringly assure his contemporaries of the authenticity of the event, were it not guaranteed by general tradition? Some details may be fictitious; but the chief fact that Oleg went to Tsargrad and returned with success seems to be authentic.[83]

Karamzin was the first historian who thought that the silence of the Byzantine sources on Oleg's campaign could not be regarded as decisive proof that his campaign did not take place at all, and that the story itself was invented by the Russian chronicler.

In 1838 in Moscow the first volume of *The History of Russia* (*Povestvovanie o Rossii*) was published, compiled by N. S. Artsybashev (1773–1841), whose work as a collection of historical materials has not lost its significance even to our own day. After relating the campaign according to the Russian Chronicle, he wrote: "We cannot dare to reject this event; but we cannot confirm it either: (1) through the complete silence about it of all the Greek and other chroniclers; (2) through the incredible timidity of the Greeks

[83] N. M. Karamzin, *History of the Russian Empire*, I, chapter V. There are several editions. Karamzin's work has been translated into French and German but, if I am not mistaken, not into English.

who, at that time, were rather strong; (3) through the extraordinary fabulousness in the description of the above event which looks rather like a fairy tale instead of the truth; (4) because in the treaty mention is made of the city Pereyaslavl, which was built later, by the Great Prince Vladimir I; and finally, (5) through the inconsistency of the provisions of the treaty with the humiliation, which the Greeks showed when asking for mercy." The treaty was ratified in 911.[84]

In the first half of the nineteenth century there was published also *A History of the Russian People* by Nicholas Polevoy (1796–1846), who by his rather elevated style wished to imitate "the immortal work of Gibbon in its new French edition with notes by Guizot." He considers the time and activities of Oleg from the point of view of the general historical conditions in Eastern Europe. Polevoy begins his narrative with a personal characteristic of Oleg. He writes: "The most recent historians call Oleg's bloody murder of Askold and Dir the stain on his glory, seeing in it treachery and robbery. But his contemporaries considered Oleg's activities otherwise, and we cannot judge, according to our own conception, the acts of a man who lived nine centuries earlier, who thought differently, and who was in circumstances unknown to us. A Varangian, seeking for booty with a sword in his hands and crossing the seas for plunder and destruction of foreign countries, cannot be accused like a citizen of a well organized society. Let us not imagine Oleg as he was not, i.e., a hero according to our ideas. . . Oleg, the murderer of the valiant possessors of Kiev, is he more guilty than the plunderer of the innocent inhabitants of Greece? If, for his contemporaries, the success justifies the means, Oleg's character is not stained by the death of Askold and Dir." [85]

Polevoy points out that the very dangerous moment for Oleg was when, at the end of the ninth century, the Magyars or Ugrians (Hungarians), in their advance westwards, passed through the territory of Kiev. But "when this cloud which threatened Oleg had rolled away, the time of the most important events came for him" (p. 114). Then turning to the relations between Simeon Tsar of Bulgaria and Byzantium, Polevoy wrote: "At that time Oleg could have been urged by Simeon to make war on the Greeks; and supported by the Bulgarian force he could hope to have success. Thus the two valiant enemies began to menace Tsargrad by land and sea: Simeon and Oleg (p. 115). "The contemporaries have recorded Oleg's campaign in

[84] N. Artsybashev, *Povestvovanie o Rossii*, I (Moscow, 1838), pp. 21–23.

[85] N. Polevoy, *A History of the Russian People*, I, 104. I use the second edition of Polevoy's work (Moscow, 1930).

poetical form. The poems of the Scalds, who perhaps accompanied Oleg towards Tsargrad, have been clearly inserted in our Annals" (p. 116). Then after describing the campaign according to the Annals, Polevoy says: "Let us put aside inventions of poetry and satisfy ourselves with the probable truth. Oleg's campaign has remained in the memory of the descendants particularly, perhaps, for the reason that it was the *first* incursion of the Northern Russians,[86] and the *only* successful campaign of the Russians on Tsargrad. . . Therefore Oleg's campaign, successful and daring, has fired the imagination of the Russians (p. 118). But was this Oleg's campaign authentic? There is a very serious doubt, because the Byzantine chroniclers say nothing about it. But from the beginning of the tenth century and down to its half, Byzantine history is not complete. We have no right to reject the tale of the chronicler, who could not invent an occurrence, which had taken place only a hundred years before him; his story may be more authentic, because he transmits it to us with all sorts of fanciful additions. We cannot reject the authenticity of Oleg's treaty, 911" (pp. 118–119). The number of ships is exaggerated (pp. 119–121).[87]

Polevoy's discussion is a very fine example of dealing critically with the question of Oleg's raid.

In his text book on *Russian History* which came out in the first half of the nineteenth century and had several editions, N. Ustryalov (1805–1870) devotes a few pages to Oleg's campaign. He writes: "Oleg looked for the richest gifts and inspired by his adventurous spirit decided to disturb (*potrevozhitj*) the Greeks. The fanciful circumstances with which tradition has adorned Oleg's Greek campaign in spite of the silence of Byzantine writers most decidedly testify to the success of the Russian raid on Byzantium: otherwise the contemporaries would have had no reason to invent either silky sails or the wheels upon which the Russian boats rolled to Tsargrad, when the wind was favorable. . . The close alliance with the Greeks was the last deed of Oleg, the unforgettable hero in our history." [88]

In his twenty-nine volume *History of Russia from the Most Ancient Times* the noted Russian historian, S. M. Solovyov (1820–1879), devotes only a few words to Oleg's raid. After telling the annalistic story, he remarks: "Such is the tradition about Oleg: history has no right whatever to suspect this tradition." [89]

In his *Ancient Russian History down to the Mongol Yoke*, Michael

[86] This statement of Polevoy may seem rather misleading.
[87] The whole discussion, Polevoy, I, pp. 104–133.
[88] N. Ustryalov, *Russian History*, 5th ed. (St. Petersburg, 1855), pp. 40–43.
[89] S. Solovyov, *History of Russia*, I, 4th ed. (Moscow, 1866), p. 130.

Pogodin (1800–1875) wrote a few pages on Oleg's campaign. In his artificial style he asks: "What more did Oleg want? Tsargrad – from of old the avid looks and intimate thoughts of all the Varangians had been concentrated on this point; there they had hoped to get for them most flattering glory and richest booty. And Oleg thought of such a campaign." Then, after giving the usual story, Pogodin makes an amazing statement saying: "*According to the testimony of the Byzantine chronicles,* the terrified Greeks asked the Russian Prince for peace on any conditions, in order to put an end to bloodshed and destruction." [90] It is almost incredible to imagine that an historian like Pogodin did not know that the Byzantine sources fail to mention Oleg's campaign.

In 1872, K. N. Bestuzhev-Ryumin (1829–1897), in the first volume of his *Russian History,* has dealt with "the famous Oleg's campaign to Tsargrad, the legendary traditions of which have been inserted into the Annals. The two treaties are the most ancient monuments of the Russian Law. Oleg's deeds have become the object of songs, a nucleus of which has been preserved in the tales of the chronicler about his campaign upon Tsargrad and about his death. Therefore it is clear that Oleg was one of those personalities who, appearing at the beginning of the history of each people, mark their borders, indicate their problems, and define for a long time their political structure." [91]

In 1873 N. P. Lambin, who died in 1882, refuting the theory of Ilovaisky, who denied the historicity of Oleg's campaign and of whom we shall speak later, asserted that Oleg's campaign was not a fairy tale, not an invention of a writer, but a popular legend describing under fanciful cover an historical fact; and that the peace treaty with the Greeks in 6415 is not a later fairy tale but a contemporary and absolutely authentic document of the beginning of the tenth century.[92]

The noted church historian E. Golubinsky (1834–1912) wrote that, after Oleg's envoys had made peace with the Greeks in 911, the Emperor Leo, according to our Annals, honored them with gifts of gold, palls, robes, etc. (see above). And then Golubinsky proceeds: "Comparing this information of our annals with the Greek records concerning the reception of foreign envoys in Constantinople, we must conclude that both the riches of the

[90] M. Pogodin, *The Ancient Russian History down to the Mongol Yoke,* I (Moscow, 1871), pp. 10–12.

[91] K. Bestuzhev-Ryumin, *The Russian History,* I (St. Petersburg, 1872), pp. 100–101.

[92] N. P. Lambin, "Was Oleg's Campaign upon Tsargrad Really a Fairy Tale?," *Journal of the Ministry of Public Instruction,* July, 1873 (part CLXVIII), 119–121; the whole article, 115–127.

imperial palace and the beauty of the churches (particularly of St. Sophia) were shown to our envoys not so much to teach them the Christian faith, as the chronicler says, but to boast in their presence and to produce an impression upon them; the absolutely identical treatment which our annalist describes in regard to the Russian envoys, we find with Constantine Porphyrogenitus regarding the Saracen (Arab) envoys." [93]

In 1903, in several articles, V. I. Lamansky (1833–1914) devoted much attention to Oleg's campaign and his discussion is not deprived of exaggeration and even of certain fantasy. "The annalistic story of the campaign is not trustworthy, because the Byzantine sources fail to mention it; it is full of fairy tale details and boastful exaggerations of Scandinavian sagas. The mention of the cavalry in the campaign refers, doubtless, to another year and to another period. We cannot reject the campaign, but we cannot accept it in the form in which it is presented in the annalistic tradition. The campaign did take place, but it is impossible to say with certainty whether it was in 907 or some earlier or later year." After these rather usual statements, Lamansky proceeds: "According to the treaties made with the Greeks (907 and 911), in his campaign Oleg already pursued other aims than Askold and Dir, who wanted only to steal and plunder. He equipped his flotilla and sailed to Constantinople in order to occupy and divert his subject *Konungs*, as well as his own and their companies (*druzhina*), perhaps even to land and settle a part of the Varangians in Greece, to take from Byzantium many gifts for his future friendship, for the promise not to allow his Russians to plunder henceforth the imperial regions; finally, he wanted to obtain an increase in payment for the hired service of the Russians by the Greeks, amelioration of the position of the Russian merchants in Greece, and development of commercial relations with her. Finally, the clever Oleg wanted to see Byzantium and its organization himself. It is probable that his *konungs* and *jarls* (earls) missed no opportunity to steal and plunder, wherever it was possible. According to the testimony of the treaties, the situation of Byzantium in 907–911 was entirely different from that in 860; at least, Oleg himself does not attribute to his campaign rapacious and piratical significance as was true in the case of the campaign of Askold and Dir." [94]

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Ukrainian historian, Michael Grushevsky, mentions Oleg's successful campaign which is in its

[93] E. Golubinsky, *History of the Russian Church*, sec. ed., I, 1 (Moscow, 1901), p. 64, n. 3.

[94] V. Lamansky, *The Slavonic Life of St. Cyril as a Religious-epic Work and as an Historical Source* (Petrograd, 1915), pp. 147–150; 153–154. Originally this study was printed in 1903–1904 as several articles in the *Journal of the Ministry of Public Instruction.*

detail thoroughly legendary, and adds that the complete silence of the Byzantine sources would be very incredible, had Oleg really marched upon Tsargrad itself; it is more probable that, at the outset of the tenth century, Oleg attacked the Byzantine regions in general, and failed to go against Tsargrad itself; in this case the Byzantine chroniclers might not have mentioned such an event.[95]

In 1908 V. Ikonnikov wrote that if Oleg's embellished campaign was not noted by the Byzantine chroniclers, its confirmation we find in the official documents – in the treaties and in the later references to them.[96]

V. O. Klyuchevsky is interested in the activities of Oleg in Russia and mentions his treaties along with those of Igor and Svyatoslav.[97] In his text book S. F. Platonov writes: "Oleg made a raid on Byzantium, arrived under the walls of Constantinople (907), ravaged the surrounding country, and laid siege to the city." [98] D. Bagaley only says that the campaigns upon Byzantium are closely connected with the commercial links of both States. The campaigns of Oleg and Igor ended with the commercial treaties.[99]

In 1925, the Russian economist Joseph Kulischer, in his *Economic History of Russia* published in German, wrote that, after the conquest of Kiev, Oleg endeavored to carry into effect his most ardent desire for Byzantine gold and precious cloths. In 907 he made a treaty between the two countries, and this treaty was succeeded by a new agreement of 911. In the book there is an interesting discussion about the treaties.[100]

In 1948 G. Vernadsky, in his book written in English, *Kievan Russia*, says that, according to the Book of Annals, Oleg's campaign was a combination of a cavalry raid across Bulgaria and naval operations. There is no direct mention of this campaign in Byzantine sources and many a historian has expressed his doubt about the authenticity of the Russian story. However, the majority of students of both Russian and Byzantine history still consider the story reliable on the whole. In my opinion the best proof of the authenticity of the story is the contents of the Russo-Byzantine treaties. It may also be pointed out that in the Arabic work by Marvazi (written about

[95] M. Grushevsky, *History of Ukraine-Russia*, I (Lwow, 1904), pp. 385–386 (in Ukrainian).

[96] V. C. Ikonnikov, *Essay on the Russian Historiography*, II, 1 (Kiev, 1908), p. 122.

[97] V. Klyuchevsky, *A Course in Russian History*, 5th ed., I (Moscow, 1925), pp. 181–182; 187–189. English translation by C. J. Hogarth, I (London–New York, 1911).

[98] S. F. Platonov, *History of Russia*, transl. by E. Aronsberg, ed. by F. A. Golder (New York, 1925), p. 25. See his *Lectures in Russian History*, ed. by Iv. Blinov, 10th ed. (Petrograd, 1917), pp. 67–68.

[99] D. I. Bagaley, *Russian History*, I (Moscow, 1914), p. 192.

[100] Josef Kulischer, *Russische Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, I (Jena, 1925), pp. 20–29. See his Russian book *History of the Russian Trade* (Leningrad, 1923).

1120; see above) the Russians are said to have reached Constantinople "in spite of the chains in the gulf." As Minorsky suggests, this is possibly a reference to Oleg's campaign of 907.[101]

Recently historians in Soviet Russia have devoted some attention to Oleg's campaign. In 1939 one of the writers in the *History of U.S.S.R.*, which was compiled by a group of historians, wrote: "If we trust the annalistic narrative, full of fairy tale details, Oleg made a campaign upon Constantinople. There are no direct indications of this campaign in Byzantine and West European sources, but there is confirmation of the annalistic story in some remarks of Constantine Porphyrogenitus and in Oleg's treaty with the Greeks, which as Marx says, includes "conditions of peace ignominious for the dignity of the Eastern Roman Empire," and which was apparently made soon after the victory of the Russian troops over the Greeks." [102]

Another Russian historian, B. D. Grekov, deals with our problem in more detail. After giving the story as it occurs in the Annals, Grekov proceeds: "In our science there is no doubt that the treaty with the Greeks was concluded by Oleg; there is no doubt that this treaty was favorable to Russia. It would seem to be the simplest way to explain these advantages as the result of Oleg's successful campaign upon Tsargrad. But several of our historians doubt whether this campaign took place in reality. S. V. Bakhrushin, for instance, calls it 'fantastic.' M. Grushevsky considers the date (907) and the details legendary but, at the same time, admits that there were certain Russian campaigns in the Byzantine regions at the beginning of the tenth century, and perhaps more than one, advantageous campaigns which have supplied popular fantasy with the occasion of embellishing them, and forced Byzantium to pay ransom and to make the new treaties very favorable to Russia. A. A. Shakhmatov and A. E. Presnyakov do not deny the fact of the campaign itself, but express very understandable doubts of its annalistic dating and other details which are indicated in the Annals. In order to disentangle this question, we have: (1) the dated treaty with the Greeks on September 2, 911; (2) the contents of the treaty which speaks undoubtedly of the military successes obtained by Russia; (3) the treaty of 944 which has brought changes in the preceding treaty – the changes which were not in favor of Russia comparatively with the treaty of 911, which is to

[101] G. Vernadsky, *Kievan Russia* (New Haven, 1948), pp. 26–27. See also his earlier book in Russian, *A Sketch of Russian History* (Prague, 1927), p. 37: Oleg's treaty was preserved in Kiev, down to the eleventh century, and then was inserted in the Annals.

[102] *Istoriya U.S.S.R.*, vol. I, from very ancient times to the end of the eighteenth century, under redaction of V. I. Lebedev, B. D. Grekov, S. V. Bakhrushin (Moscow, 1839), p. 92. The remarks of Constantine Porphyrogenitus are not specified.

be connected with Igor's not very successful campaigns. Hence it is clear that the campaign was not mere fantasy. Consequently we have complete right to draw the conclusion that the treaty of 911 is the result of a successful campaign upon Byzantium." And then, for further proof, Grekov adduces the passage from Constantine Porphyrogenitus' work *De administrando imperior*, which we have discussed above. "This is a picture of reality," Grekov continues, "Here the author has in view not one particular campaign of Russia upon Byzantium, but the entire system of Russo-Byzantino-Pecheneg relations." [103]

In 1947 Baron Michael de Taube published the first volume of his book written in French *Rome and Russia before the Invasion of the Tatars.* Although this volume deals with the earlier period of Russian history (856–882), so that, as the author says, the rule of Oleg is to be discussed in the second volume, which, so far as I know, has not yet been published (p. 18, n. 1), we nevertheless see from this first volume that the author accepts the historicity of the campaign, the chronology of the Russian Annals, and the authenticity of the treaties. "The regime of peace which had been established at last in 874 between Constantinople and Kiev and which was to last down to Oleg's renewed attacks in about 907–911, opened an era of military assistance of the Russians to their new coreligionaries of Byzantium." [104]

In 1948, in the *History of Culture of Ancient Russia*, which was compiled by several writers, we read the following brief notice: "Oleg made a victorious campaign to the walls of Tsargrad-Constantinople. The Greeks asked for peace, paid ransom and were forced to conclude a treaty with Oleg which was extremely important for the Russian merchants and for Russia in general. This treaty is attributed to the year 911.[105]

Russian Byzantinists. The Russian byzantinists recognize the authenticity of Oleg's campaign. In the years 1917–1946, A. Vasiliev connected it with the Arabo-Byzantine relations in the beginning of the tenth century, accepted the theory of the two treaties, the first oral in 907 and the second formal treaty in 911, and explained the participation of the Russians in the

[103] B. V. Grekov, *Kievan Russia*, 4th ed. (Moscow-Leningrad, 1944), p. 260–261. See above.

[104] Baron Michel de Taube, *Rome et la Russie avant l'invasion des Tatars (IX^e–XIII^e siècles). I. Le Prince Askold, L'origine de l'État de Kiev et la première conversion des Russes (856–882).* Paris, 1947, pp. 18, 22, 30, 43, 96.

[105] *History (Istoriya) of the Culture of Ancient Russia. The Pre-Mongol Period*, I. Under the general redaction of B. V. Grekov and M. I. Artamonov, I (Moscow–Leningrad, 1948), p. 12.

Byzantine navy in 910 from the provisions of the first treaty; we have discussed this question above.[106]

In 1916 M. Sozyumov writes that Leo the Deacon was well acquainted with Russian affairs; so that we may surmise that he knew about Oleg's campaign. Then citing Leo's passage of the violation of the sworn treaties by Igor, which we have discussed above, Sozyumov remarks: "Oleg ruled on behalf of Igor; therefore by his campaign Igor violated as if his own oath. . . Why, however, do all the Byzantine chronicles, without exception, silence Oleg's victory? In all probability, there was no victory whatever: Oleg advanced towards Tsargrad; but the matter did not come to armed conflict; the Greeks had paid off, and the treaty was concluded. Chroniclers could have passed in silence such an insignificant event." [107]

The most detailed and well documented study in favor of the historicity of Oleg's campaign (published in Belgrad, Yugoslavia, in 1939) is that of Professor G. A. Ostrogorsky. He decidedly rejects the theories of H. Grégoire, S. Runciman, N. Brian-Chaninov, G. Laehr, Mrs. G. da Costa-Louillet, and N. de Baumgarten, who deny the authenticity of Oleg's campaign, and whose studies we shall discuss below. Ostrogorsky is perfectly right in stating that, when we say that all the Byzantine chronicles are silent as to his campaign, we forget that we are dealing with only one chronicle of Symeon Logothete, whose complete original Greek text has not yet been published, but whose complete Old Slavonic version was edited in 1905. The other chroniclers of the tenth century, Leo the Grammarian, Theodosius of Melitene, the anonymous Continuer of George Hamartolus, and the so-called Pseudo-Symeon Magister, are not original writers; but they are all copyists, abbreviators, or revisers of the above Chronicle of Symeon Logothete. All the details of the Russian Annals, including the fixing of Oleg's shield or the shields of the Russian warriors upon the gate of Constantinople, may be explained by Scandinavian and West European Norman customs. His conclusion is that the narrative of the Russian Chronicle is not a later apocrypha, but it rests upon a very old source, perhaps, upon notices contemporary with the event itself. "So we come to the conclusion that Oleg

[106] A. Vasiliev, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Time of the Macedonian Dynasty*, I (St. Petersburg, 1902), pp. 166–167 (in Russian). *Idem*, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, I (Madison, Wisconsin, 1928), pp. 389–390; French ed. I (Paris, 1932), p. 424; Turkish ed. I (Ankara, 1943), pp. 405–406; Spanish ed. I (Barcelona, 1946), pp. 396–397. In the early Russian edition, I (Petrograd, 1917), p. 294 (without references). In this study, I have changed my opinion about the treaties.

[107] M. Sozyumov, "On the Sources of Leo the Deacon and Scylitzes," *Vizantiyskoe Obozrenie*, II (Yuryev, 1916), p. 165 (in Russian).

not only did exist, but he also attacked Constantinople, and actually did fix his shield on the gate of Tsargrad." [108]

Oleg's campaign should have been discussed by F. I. Uspensky in the second part of the second volume of his *History of the Byzantine Empire.* The first part of this volume which contains the iconoclastic period and the problem of the Slavonic apostles, Cyril (Constantine) and Methodius in the middle of the ninth century, breaks off in the middle of a phrase. But this second part has not been published, although the third volume, containing the later period of the Empire down to its fall, came out in Moscow-Leningrad in 1948.[109]

NEGATIVE ARGUMENT: OLEG'S CAMPAIGN IS NOT AN HISTORICAL FACT

Although the great majority of Russian scholars consider Oleg's campaign an historical fact, there are several who regard it as a legend, a myth, which has nothing to do with history. Their special reasons for this negative point of view may stem partly from the complete absence of Byzantine evidence on the campaign and partly from the fact that they do not want to recognize in the story as recounted in the Russian Annals any kernel of historical truth, since they see in it nothing but a fable, invented by the chronicler. The names of some Russian historians holding this point of view follow.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, N. I. Kostomarov (1817–1885) was, if I am not mistaken, the first to deny the historicity of Oleg's expedition. According to him, "Oleg's personality appears in our primary annals entirely as a personality of tradition but not of history. Except for our chronicle, we find no allusion anywhere to his existence; and the chronicler himself evidently had only one written source which announced to him that in Russia there had once lived a prince with such a name: it was the treaty with the Greeks." After telling the story as it is narrated in the Annals, Kostomarov concludes that "without any doubt, it belongs to tradition, or, more exactly, to song." The boats on wheels remind him of a Russian proverb whose equivalent I could not find in English, and which means in English something like this: "If thou dislikest, do not listen to it; but do not prevent lying" (*Ne ljubo ne slushay, a lgatj ne meshay*); in other words, this episode is a complete falsehood.

[108] G. Ostrogorsky, "L'expédition du Prince Oleg contre Constantinople en 907," *Annales de l'Institut Kondakov (Seminarium Kondakovianum)*, XI (1939), 47–61; conclusion, 61; note additionelle, p. 62 (on Baumgarten's monograph). See also his *Geschichte des Byzantinischen Staates* (München, 1940), p. 182.

[109] The manuscript of the second volume, part two, has been left by Uspensky with so many omissions that it could not be printed. See the preface to the third volume, p. 6.

In his campaign upon Tsargrad Oleg represents an ideal hero (*bogatyr*) of popular songs, whose traces can be found in the Russian epic poems. From the treaty we cannot say that before its conclusion any war took place; there is no allusion to the campaign in the Greek sources. But there is Oleg's name in popular fantasy, and another fantastic Oleg has survived down to our day in the popular epic poems (*byliny*) under the name of Volga. The attack of this epic Volga against the Turkish land, as it is narrated in the Russian popular ballads, corresponds to Oleg's annalistic attack on Byzantium.[110]

In all probability under the influence of Kostomarov's theory, D. Ilovaisky (1832–1920) also denied the historicity of Oleg's campaign. In his earlier book *Studies on the History of Russia*, he narrated how Oleg gathered an enormous army from all the peoples who were his subjects, and undertook his campaign upon Tsargrad on a vast scale; the campaign was very successful, *if it were authentic.* We may put aside Oleg's campaign which the Byzantines fail to mention. In the first volume of his other work, *History of Russia*, Ilovaisky, after discussing the treaties, which are a precious source for the earlier history of Russia, writes: "Adducing Oleg's treaties, I put aside our annalistic traditions about this prince . . . and about his miraculous campaign upon Byzantium, because these tales are not confirmed by any trustworthy sources, and have fully the character of fables. Byzantine historians, for instance, know nothing about the siege of Constantinople by Oleg, and some scholars have attempted to explain their silence by their national pride. This is incredible. But according to the tale itself of our annals Oleg only laid siege to Tsargrad but failed to capture it." [111]

In 1906, K. Tiander remarks in passing that we have nothing which would speak in favor of the fact that the conclusion of the treaty was the result of Oleg's campaign. From this treaty it is not even clear that a war preceded it. "Finally, Byzantine chroniclers know nothing of any devastation (*razgrom*) of Tsargrad under the leadership of Oleg. Therefore it seems to me that Oleg's campaign has been invented by the Russian annalist." [112]

In 1924, A. Lyaschenko wrote that in the legendary narrative of the Rus-

[110] N. I. Kostomarov, *Traditions of the Primary Russian Annals, VII, Traditions about Oleg. Collection of N. I. Kostomarov's works. Historical monographs and studies*, vol. XIII (St. Petersburg, 1904), pp. 321–330. The whole section on Oleg, pp. 321–336.

[111] D. Ilovaisky, *Studies on the Origin of Russia*, sec. ed. (Moscow, 1882), p. 6. The first edition of this book came out in Moscow, in 1876. *History of Russia*, I. *The Kievan Period* (Moscow, 1876), pp. 23–24 and note 6; p. 289. This is the edition I have used. The second edition, 1900.

[112] K. Tiander, *The Voyages of the Scandinavians to the White Sea* (St. Petersburg, 1906), p. 405.

sian Chronicle about Oleg's successful attack on Tsargrad lies a popular tradition enlarged by the annalist's speculations and commentaries.[113]

In 1930–1931 H. Rydzevski published an article in German, "The Danish Huno Saga," in which she calls Oleg's campaign unhistorical (*unhistorisch*).[114]

In 1936, in his review of B. D. Grekov's book *The Feudal Relations in the Kievan State* (see above), S. Bakhrushin wrote that it would be better not to include in this essay the historical facts whose authenticity is more than problematic; such are, among some other episodes, Oleg's first treaty and his fantastic campaign upon Constantinople. As to the Russian campaigns upon Constantinople, in spite of many doubts expressed concerning the tale of the Laurentian Chronicle, its scheme continues to affect scholarly conceptions and, in particular, the conception of Grekov. If we compare the Laurentian Chronicle with the First Novgorod Chronicle, which has preserved a more archaic version, we shall see that originally, in the *Tale of Bygone Years*, there was recorded only one victorious campaign of Oleg upon Constantinople, which is not mentioned by any Greek or West European sources; but the legend has preserved memories of many inroads of Rus upon the shores of the Black Sea. Only later, from the Greek sources, were the accounts of the historical campaigns of 860 and 941 inserted in the annalistic versions. Bakhrushin accepts Shakhmatov's theory that the treaty of 907 is not a trustworthy or authentic document.[115]

OLEG'S CAMPAIGN IN FOREIGN LITERATURE

POSITIVE ARGUMENT: OLEG'S CAMPAIGN IS AN HISTORICAL FACT

Foreign writers, as it is to be expected, devote little attention to Oleg's raid, and show only a rather casual interest in it. Only recently, in connection with a wave of hypercriticism which has swept over the minds of quite a

[113] A. Lyaschenko, "The Annalistic Tales about the Death of Oleg the Wise," *Izvestiya Otdeleniya Russkago Yazyka i Slovesnosti Rossiyskoy Akademii Nauk*, XXIX (1924), pp. 254–255.

[114] Helene Rydzevski, "Die dänische Huno Sage und eine Episode aus der altrussischen Chronik," *Acta Philologica Scandinavica. Tidsskrift for nordisk Sprogforskning*, V (Copenhagen, 1930–1931), p. 34; the whole article, pp. 34–40. In her Russian article published in 1932, H. Rydzevski remarks that Oleg's campaign itself and his treaty are debatable as historical facts. "About the annalistic tradition of the expedition of Rus on Tsargrad in 907," *Izvestiya (Accounts) of the Academy of Sciences of U.S.S.R. Section of the Social Sciences*, 1932, p. 472.

[115] S. Bakhrushin, in the magazine *Istorik Marxist*, III (1937), 165–175. See A. Shakhmatov, "Some Remarks upon the Treaties of Oleg and Igor with the Greeks," *Accounts (Zapiski) of the Neophilological Society at the University of Saint Petersburg*, VII (St. Petereburg, 1914), 400. About this article I shall speak below. Against Shakhmatov's theory see Ostrogorsky, *L'Expédition du Prince Oleg*, p. 53, n. 17.

few West European scholars, as to early Russian history and the Russian Primary Chronicle, there have come out several studies or articles which reject the historicity of Oleg's campaign and even of Oleg himself.

Herein I give first the names of a few foreign (not Russian) writers who accept the historicity of Oleg's campaign.

In 1781 a French work in several volumes, *Histoire de Russie*, was published by Pierre Charles Levesque. The author, after mentioning Oleg's victories over several Slavonic tribes, wrote that all this had been nothing but preparation for his ambitious aims. It was towards Constantinople that his desires were directed. Then he tells the story of the expedition as it stands in the Chronicle. "The Emperor Leo, who was called the Philosopher, because he devoted his time to vain studies instead of fulfilling the duties of a sovereign, reigned at that time in Constantinople." The author knows that the Greek historians fail to mention Oleg's expedition. But he says that this silence may not be sufficient ground for rejecting the narrative of the ancient chronographer. It inspires some doubt about the exactness of his story of the expedition, which was not as important as the annalist describes. He lived about two centuries after Oleg's administration and could have been misled by exaggerated tradition. The treaties are authentic precious documents.[116] Levesque was close to the correct interpretation of Oleg's campaign.

In 1783–1784 in France the *Histoire physique, morale, civile et politique de la Russie ancienne* was published, whose author, Le Clerc, devotes a fair amount of attention to Oleg's rule and his campaign against Constantinople. Oleg, "after rejoicing over the assassination of Ascold and Dir, which made him master of Kiof (Kiev)," concentrated his mind on Constantinople. "The thought and desire of riches excite him and show him in perspective a new fortune: the capture of Constantinople becomes the object of his wishes, and soon the Bosphorus becomes the bloody theater of his exploits. But how will he be able to reach the strait over which is the city of the Caesars which the Russians call Tsargrad? How? The energy of the pirates is capable of undertaking everything and effecting everything. Cupidity is their tactic, lust for booty feeds their vigor . . . does one need anything more for the execution of things which fail to seem even possible? The Russians could reach Constantinople only through greater and more real labors than those of Hercules." After many perils they reach Constantinople. "The strong chains closing the entrance of the strait which Constantinople dominates,

[116] P.-Ch. Levesque, *Histoire de Russie*. New edition, I (Hamburg and Brunswick, 1800), pp. 70–81. The first edition came out in 1781.

insurmountable obstacles for other men but not for the pirates, – were ineffectual against the Russians. They disembark, beach the ships, make wheels which they adapt: all this seems incredible, and all this is true . . . But what is impossible to believe is what the chronicle adds: 'When the wind was favorable, their ships spreading the sails arrive under the walls of Constantinople,' i.e., they sail on dry land . . . When the armed men wearing rags decided to cover themselves with gold and to enjoy life, they plunge into blood and voluptuousness which shock one's nature . . . Their rage is more cruel than that exercised over the inhabitants of the New World." And then, after describing more cruelty and violence of the invaders, the author says: "Let us throw a veil upon so much horror, and say how the Greeks appeased these exterminators." In the same style Le Clerc ends his story and mentions the two treaties, "Here is the treaty recorded by Nestor, which Lomonofof (for Lomonosof) copied in his *Ancient History of Russia.*" [117]

In 1876 a French historian, A. Couret, published a long article *Russia in Constantinople. First Attempts of the Russians against the Greek Empire.*[118] He writes that, according to the Russian Annals, about the year 906, Oleg levied a powerful army, an army of various peoples, like that of Attila, and reminding one of the ancient barbarian invasions which had destroyed the old Roman Empire. The Emperor Leo the Philosopher, plunging into astrological calculations, studying the stars from the height of the towers of his palace, was not ready to resist. The enormous iron chain was used across the Golden Horn to stop Oleg, and the latter, with his frail barques, did not attempt to break the obstacle which Byzantine pusillanimity had set against him. After telling the episode of the shield fixed at the gates of Byzantium, Couret remarks: "and this deceiving image will perpetually incite the Russians to the conquest of Constantinople." But the narrative of Nestor, if disengaged from the fabulous or rather legendary element, gives a natural and sensible picture. Couret is acquainted with Lambin's article which we have discussed above. In conclusion Couret says that we must admit that Oleg, at the head of a coalition of the barbarian tribes, made an expedition against Byzantium, and perhaps, by a bold stroke (*coup de main*), as the Bulgarians

[117] Le Clerc, *Histoire physique, morale, civile et politique de la Russie ancienne*, I (Paris, 1783), pp. 102–116. Le Clerc's full name is Nicolas Gabriel Clerc, called Le Clerc. For a very interesting comment on this book in two volumes compiled by a Russian writer, I. N. Boltin (1735–1792), an official of the War Collegium, see A. Vasiliev, *The Russian Attack on Constantinople in 860* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1946), pp. 121–122.

[118] Alphonse Couret, "La Russie à Constantinople, Premières tentatives des Russes contre l'Empire Grec 865–1116," *Revue des questions historiques*, XIX (1876), § 3. "La légende d'Oleg, 906–907," pp. 84–90; the whole article, pp. 69–129.

in 712, as the rebel Thomas in 822, penetrated as far as the port. But from this to become master of Constantinople, there is a world of difference. Such a false rumor, however, did exist, and popular songs have avidly accepted this provocative falsehood; the Greeks, on the contrary, have remained silent, thinking to hide from history the semisuccess of this presumptuous attempt, and through this silence they have left room for legend.

In 1938 an American writer of Scandinavian origin, G. Bie Ravndal, published an interesting book *Stories of the East-Vikings*. Since this book is very little known in America and particularly in Europe, I will treat his narrative of Oleg's expedition in some detail; his presentation of the story is not free from some exaggeration and errors. He writes: "Equipped with a detachment of cavalry but above all with some 2000 boats, suggestive of an army of more than 80,000 troops, Oleg sailed for Byzantium (907), leaving behind him at Kiev young Igor, whom he had safely married to Olga or Helga, a Varing princess of charm and wit from Pskov (on Lake Peipus, near Izborsk). The Greeks promptly took steps to meet the fresh danger by closing the 'Sud,' Nestor's version of the old Nordic *sund*, i.e., in this case the strait which led from the lower Bosphorus into the Golden Horn, Constantinople's inner harbor. For such a bar or boom they used iron chains stretched on pontoons across the narrow fiord. Undaunted Oleg ordered his boats to be beached, put on rollers, and aided by wind, horsepower and grease, 'sailed' across the neck of land which separated the Bosphorus from the upper reach of the Golden Horn. Such tactics, familiar to the Northmen in their river-faring, had been employed at Byzantium by the Avars more than two centuries earlier. Then, somehow, the Byzantines had managed to bore holes in the boats, which thus were rendered useless.[119] Oleg proved more circumspect than the Khagan of the Avars, and Byzantium was at his mercy. . . Oleg hung up his shield on the Adrianople gate, not in token of victory, as claimed by Nestor and numerous critics, but as a sign of peace, and started for home. . . The Rus were masters of the situation, and the treaty plainly shows it. . . As a matter of fact, the ostensible motive of Oleg's expedition was the acquisition for the Rus of the same commercial privileges as provisionally slaked the appetite of foreign nations represented in Constantinople (Chersonese, Amalfites, Pisans, Venetians, Genoese, Arabs of Spain, Khazars). . . For all we know, the Rus may have been well pleased, as they pretended to be, with the results derived from their offen-

[119] So far I do not know what source Ravndal had for this particular information, if he had in view the siege of Constantinople by the Avars in 626. See A. Pernice, *L'Imperatore Eraclio* (Florence, 1905), pp. 142–147. J. Kulakovsky, *History of Byzantium*, III (Kiev, 1915), pp. 76–85 (in Russian).

sive, although the size of the armed forces under their ensign suggests an ulterior motive beyond extorting 'Danegelt' and a treaty of commerce. . . To the Byzantine empire of that period Bulgars and Saracens no doubt constituted a far more serious danger than the incipient Rus state on the Dnieper. But this qualification does not exclude the possibility that in the councils of the 'great army' of the Vikings, perhaps the most potent military factor of its time, plans may have been mapped out for seizing Constantinople, cardinal attraction of the Christian world." [120] Of course, the most essential exaggeration of Ravndal is the idea of Oleg's campaign as an expedition on a very large scale pursuing vast political objects.

In 1946 at Cambridge (England) there was published an interesting little book (174 pages) by Mrs. N. K. Chadwick, *The Beginnings of Russian History: an Enquiry into Sources*, which we have mentioned above several times. The author is inclined to accept the historicity of Oleg's raid with some reserve. We read: "It would, I think, be a mistake to dismiss the reign of Oleg as mythical on the ground that it has not hitherto been possible to identify him with any of the more prominent men known to us from the Scandinavian sagas. Even the story of his raid on Byzantium can hardly be dismissed as 'apocryphal' on the ground that no reference is made to it in Greek sources. . . It seems to me extremely probable that the story of Oleg's attack on Byzantium, and of his treaty with the Greeks, reflects certain historical facts, though these facts have become distorted by the oral medium through which they have passed" (p. 25). Mrs. Chadwick writes that according to the *Povest* (i.e., *The Russian Primary Chronicle*) Oleg's expedition against the Greeks took place in 904 (*sic*) and that Greek writers make no direct mention of it (p. 47).

In 1947 the Greek historian, K. I. Amantos, aware of the two opposite viewpoints of Grégoire and Ostrogorsky, says that the silence of the Byzantine sources may be explained by the fact that Oleg's raid was hardly noticed in Constantinople itself: "the raid easily ended in an agreement, because the Russians, as Europeans, were merchants; they were not entirely destructive warriors like the nomads, Arabs, Avars, and other Hunnic peoples." [121] This passage seems not to be very clear.

In the same year, 1947, the noted French historian, L. Bréhier, rejecting Grégoire's drastic criticism and following Ostrogorsky's study, wrote that "only three years after the disaster of Thessalonica, at the moment when

[120] G. Bie Ravndal, *Stories of the East-Vikings* (Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1938), pp. 193–194; 198; 200.

[121] Κωνσταντίνου Ι. Ἀμάντου Ἱστορία τοῦ Βυζαντινοῦ Κράτους, II (Athens, 1947), pp. 77–78.

Leo VI was preparing his revenge against the Arabs, a new attack of the Russians, conducted by Oleg, Rurik's brother and successor, came to menace Constantinople. After devastating the environs of the city, Oleg forced Leo VI to grant him an interview and conclude a treaty which was renewed in 911, and which contained the commercial clauses advantageous for the colony of the Russian merchants who were established at the suburb of Saint-Mamas." [122] As we see, Bréhier mentions the personal interview between Oleg and Leo VI, which cannot be confirmed by any evidence.

NEGATIVE ARGUMENT: OLEG'S CAMPAIGN IS NOT AN HISTORICAL FACT

Among West European scholars, the tendency of refuting the historicity of Oleg's campaign may be noted as early as the eighteenth century. I wish to give here some examples.

J. Pray, a Hungarian historian (1723–1801), published in Latin, *Historico-critical Dissertations on the Ancient Annals of the Huns, Avars, and Hungarians,* where he wrote that, while the Magyars (Hungarians) were fighting against Kiev, Oleg, Igor's tutor, ruling there, was excessively glorified by the Russian annalist, Nestor, for his military successes. According to his record, he with an enormous number of horses and with a thousand ships filled with warriors (*militibus refertas*) moved to Constantinople and forced the Greeks to pay ransom to him. Since Greek and Russian writers fail to mention his expedition, it is difficult to believe in it as well as in the great power of Oleg, who was vanquished by the Magyars and forced to pay them annual tribute.[123]

Another Hungarian historian of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, Stephanus (Istvan) Katona (1732–1811), writing almost entirely on the basis of Pray's work and reproducing long excerpts from it, raises the question as to whether at that time (in the ninth-tenth century) Russians were as powerful as Nestor describes. The Greek writers, Theophanes' Continuators (*sic*, in plural), who chronologically were much closer to the events than Nestor, fail to mention Oleg's expedition. His power has been extremely exaggerated by Nestor. Katona writes: "I have carefully examined Nestor's narrative comparing it with the Greek writers whose authority must be more important than his; and I have found that they disagree." Nestor may have confused Oleg's expedition with that of 941; but at that time Oleg was already dead. As a result we must admit that either the

[122] Louis Bréhier, *Vie et Mort de Byzance* (Paris, 1947), pp. 150–151.

[123] *Dissertationes historico-criticae in annales veteres Hunnorum, Avarum et Hungarorum* auctore Georgio Pray (Vindobonae, 1774), Dissertatio IV, 77 (§ viii).

power of the Russians has been exaggerated beyond measure (*super fidem*) or the chronology has been confused.[124]

Gibbon, who knew Catona's work, remarks: "On Oleg, Katona uses his advantage to disprove this Russian victory, which would cloud the siege of Kiev by the Hungarians." [125] On the expedition proper, Gibbon wrote that "the silence of the Greeks may inspire some doubts of the truth, or at least of the importance, of the second attempt of Oleg, the guardian of the sons of Rurik." [126]

In 1829 a German historian, F. Wilken, whose name we have mentioned above, published a very substantial monograph *On the Relations between the Russians and the Byzantine Empire from the Ninth to the Twelfth Century*. He devotes five pages to Oleg's campaign against Constantinople.[127]

According to Wilken, if we take into consideration all the fantastic details of the expedition which are described in the Russian Annals, the complete silence of Byzantine historians about the campaign would be absolutely impossible to understand. The annalistic story contains an entirely mythical tradition, and Wilken, without any hesitation, eliminates it from the field of true history, and regards the story given in the Russian Annals as a fable. But Wilken's final conclusion is not as decisive as could be expected, when he says that the tradition of the Russian Annals is either totally groundless, or else describes a very insignificant occurrence which, through arbitrary embellishment and boastful exaggeration, has been raised to a wonderful event (pp. 95–97).

If, from the nineteenth century we pass to the twentieth, we shall see at once that, among West European scholars, the tendency of refuting Oleg's campaign has been particularly marked in recent years, beginning with the twenties. I can give a considerable list of the scholars who deny the historicity of the campaign and sometimes even the historicity of Oleg himself as a person.

In 1925 and 1929, a Russian writer living in West Europe, Brian-Chaninov, in his studies written in French, proclaims that the expedition of

[124] *Historia critica primorum Hungariae Ducum ex fide domesticorum et exterorum scriptorum concinnata* a Stephano Katona (Pestini, 1778), pp. 75–79.

[125] E. Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, chapter LV; ed. J. B. Bury, VI (London, 1902), p. 155, n. 77.

[126] Gibbon-Bury, VI, p. 155. The close of Gibbon's statement is not very clear.

[127] F. Wilken, "Ueber die Verhältnisse der Russen zum Byzantinischen Reiche in dem Zeitraume vom neunten bis zum zwölften Jahrhundert," *Abhandlungen der historisch-philologischen Klasse der K. Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin*, 1829, pp. 75–135; on Oleg's campaign, pp. 93–98.

Oleg against Constantinople was entirely invented by the Russian annalist, and expresses doubts that the treaty was signed during Oleg's rule.[128]

In the same year (1929) a British historian, S. Runciman, after mentioning Oleg's "enormous land and sea expedition against Constantinople in 907," told by Nestor, says that "the expedition, not mentioned elsewhere, is probably legendary – a case of imaginative wish – fulfilment – or perhaps it was Bulgaria that suffered from it. But the treaty may well be authentic, concluded by the Greeks at the news of a projected expedition." Then in a note to the same page Runciman writes: "The whole of the early part of Nestor's story has been called mythical, including the lives of Oleg and Igor." [129]

Among the West European historians, it was G. Laehr, a German scholar, who in his book *The Origins of the Russian State*, published in 1930, devoted much attention to the question of Oleg's raid, of which he speaks in three places: (1) in the text itself where he discusses Oleg's treaties with the Byzantine Emperors; (2) in the notes to this particular section; and (3) in the special Excursus II entitled "The supposed campaign of Oleg against Constantinople in the year 907." [130] The first two brief sections, dealing exclusively with the treaties are not interesting; but it is to be pointed out that the author knew the very important text of Leo the Deacon referring to the treaties which we have discussed above. In his Excursus, in which he shows his acquaintance with the Russian literature, he mentions Vasilievsky's words which we have cited above, that in Pseudo-Symeon's text may be seen perhaps the only allusion to Oleg's campaign. Laehr decidedly rejects such a possibility, and states that in the long list of place names given by Pseudo-Symeon and in their etymological interpretation, there is not a word about Oleg's campaign, so that it is absolutely impossible to connect this pseudo-etymological play of words (*Spielerei*) with Oleg.

The designation of the Ῥῶς as οἱ καὶ Δρομῖται, which we have also within the Continuer of Theophanes and Pseudo-Symeon in their description of Igor's expedition, Laehr connects with the Ἀχιλλέως δρόμος, which we have discussed above. If we think how accurately the Byzantine sources describe the assault of the Bulgarian prince Symeon on Constantinople and his nego-

[128] N. Brian-Chaninov, "Les origines de la Russie historique," *Revue des questions historiques*, 102–103 (1925), 259–316; on Oleg, 312–315. *Idem*, *Histoire de la Russie* (Paris, 1929), 18–20. In Russian the author's name is Brianchaninov, without hyphen. On the mediocre value of his studies, see Ostrogorsky, *L'Expédition du Prince Oleg*, 49.

[129] Steven Runciman, *The Emperor Romanus Lecapenus and His Reign* (Cambridge, 1929), p. 110 and note 3.

[130] G. Laehr, *Die Anfänge des russischen Reiches* (Berlin, 1930), pp. 34–35 (text); 130–131 (notes to this chapter); 95–99 (Excursus II).

tiations with Romanus Lecapenus, we cannot explain the complete silence of those sources concerning Oleg's attack. And then, for further confirmation of his point of view, Laehr mentions the book *History of Russia* written in French by N. Brian-Chaninov in 1929, who regards Oleg's campaign as an invention of Russian tradition.[131] In Laehr's opinion, the description of the expedition of 907 as it is found in the Russian Annals was fabricated according to the expedition of 860. His conclusion, after careful study of the sources, is that Oleg's campaign against Byzantium is to be regarded as a saga.

In 1937 the French article of H. Grégoire was published, which has produced a powerful impression on several historians.[132] The fundamental thesis which the author advances in his study is that the Russian Prince Oleg never existed. He opens his article with the sweeping statement which cannot be accepted, that the majority of the specialists do not admit the historicity of the Prince whom the Old Russian Chronicle, the so-called Chronicle of Nestor, considers as the successor to the Varangian Rurik, and calls Oleg the Diviner (*le Devin*) or the Prophetic "*Veschij Oleg*" (in old Russian). And in the note to the same page (p. 80), referring to the monograph of G. Laehr, which we have discussed above, and to the German translation of the Chronicle of Nestor by R. Trautmann (*Die Nestor Chronik*, 1931), Grégoire says that, at the present time, there is complete agreement concerning the *nonhistoricity* of Oleg's expedition (*sur la non-historicité de l'expédition d'Oleg, il n'y a aujourd'hui qu'une voix*). Then, a little farther on (p. 82), Grégoire writes: "I doubt, as many critics do, that Oleg really existed. But what is certain is that he never went to Constantinople."

A long list of Russian historians who believe in the historicity of Oleg's campaign, and who do not even question Oleg's existence, has been given above; and this list clearly shows that Grégoire's above statements cannot be accepted.

Grégoire explains the appearance of the name of Oleg who never existed, from an inscription on the boundary stone between Byzantium and Bulgaria, which set the frontier between these two countries in 904. In the fourth line of this inscription we read: Ἐπὶ Θεοδώρου ὀλγου τρακανοῦ. Here the Turkish

[131] On this book see above, pp. 214–215.

[132] Henri Grégoire, "La légende d'Oleg et l'expédition d'Igor," *Bulletin de la classe des Lettres et des Sciences Morales et Politiques de l'Académie royale de Belgique*, XXIII (1937), pp. 79–80. In his preliminary succinct communication on this subject, which was presented in Paris, March 19, 1937, rather in the form of an improvisation (*en quelque sorte improvisée*), Grégoire remarks: "It is not necessary to tell the byzantinists that the *resumé* of the primitive Russian history made according to the Chronicle of Nestor contains almost as many errors as words." Then he gives briefly the contents of his above article, "Miscellania epica et etymologica. I. La légende d'Oleg," *Byzantion*, XI (1936), 601–604.

word *ulug* (now *ulu*) is the title of Theodorus, a high Bulgarian official, meaning "great," the great tarkhan, a very high dignitary in the Bulgarian officialdom. It would be out of place to explain here in detail Grégoire's complicated speculations as to how this title from the above inscription has come into the Russian Annals as the proper name of Oleg.[133] It seems to me that this hypothesis is too artificial to be accepted and that it is unnecessary, because Oleg did exist. Grégoire's statement that the name of the Russian Prince Igor is unknown to the Greeks (p. 81) is inexact, because as we have seen above, Leo the Deacon mentions his name. The dating of Oleg's second treaty is not 912, as Grégoire says (pp. 83, 87), but 911.

In 1939 a French monograph by N. de Baumgarten *On the Origin of Russia* was published.[134] The author belongs to that group of the scholars who deny the authenticity of early Russian history. He says that true Russian history begins only with the year 941, the date of the expedition of the Great Prince of Kiev, Igor, against Constantinople, and that all that precedes this date is mere legend and tradition mixed with fable (p. 5). After such a sweeping statement we are not surprised to read that the Primary Russian Chronicle gives us a fabulous and fantastic tale of Oleg's exploits, a popular ballad intended to flatter the national *amour propre* (p. 39); he mentions Oleg's fantastic expedition (p. 41). He calls the treaty of 907 "a false treaty" (p. 42), and asserts that the contents of the treaty, which the Russian chronicles have preserved, decidedly exclude any possibility of a preceding conflict (p. 40).

In September, 1936, at the International Congress of Byzantine Studies in Rome, Mrs. da Costa-Louillet read a paper in French under the title "Were There Russian Invasions in the Byzantine Empire before 860?" In a one-page resumé of this paper we read: "As to Oleg's so-called expedition (907), we, along with Mr. St. Runciman, do not consider it historical, even if the existence of the treaties of commerce recorded by Nestor is incontestable." [135] The next year her article under the same title was printed with an introduction written by H. Grégoire.[136] In this article she repeats her above

[133] Professor F. Uspensky, who in 1898 examined this inscription, mistook the title ολγου for the proper name of Oleg saying that the contemporary of the Bulgarian dignitary, the Russian Prince Oleg, bore the same name. F. Uspensky, "The boundary stone between Byzantium and Bulgaria under Symeon," *Transactions of the Russian Archaeological Institute at Constantinople*, III (1898), 186–187 (in Russian).

[134] N. de Baumgarten, "Aux origines de la Russie," *Orientalia Christiana Analecta*, No. 119 (Rome, 1939), p. 88. On this monograph see the additional note of Ostrogorsky, *L'Expédition du Prince Oleg*, p. 62.

[135] G. da Costa-Louillet, "Y eut-il des invasions russes dans l'Empire byzantin avant 860?," *Studi bizantini e neoellenici*, V (Rome, 1939), 85.

[136] Germaine da Costa-Louillet, "Y eut-il des invasions russes dans l'Empire byzantin avant 860?" *Byzantion*, XV (1940–1941), 231–248.

statement, and adds that not one Greek source speaks of this expedition, and she affirms that history knows only two Russian attacks on Constantinople: those of 860 and 941 (235).[137]

Finally in 1949 there was published a long article by R. H. Dolley, *Oleg's Mythical Campaign against Constantinople.*[138] He opens his article with a reference to the above mentioned paper of Grégoire, who, denying the historicity of the Russian attack on Constantinople, "brought to the subject so great a reputation, so fundamental a scepticism and such novel arguments as to be generally regarded as the protagonist of those scholars who consider the Chronicle of Nestor a source to be used with the utmost caution" (p. 106). Dolley's thesis or, as he says himself, his wish is to suggest a compromise: "that we accept the authenticity of the treaties, but reject absolutely the historicity of the attack which is so essentially incompatible with their contents. . . These treaties of 907 and 911, in my opinion, inspired the invention of an attack on Constantinople" (p. 124–125). Discussing the question of the silence of the Greek evidence on the attack, he asks how Symeon Logothetes, "our primary source for any reconstruction of Leon's reign, and a fervent admirer of Romanos Lecapenos," could have missed "a golden opportunity to be seized with both hands, a challenge to his powers of rhetoric to describe the scene when the most Christian Emperor of New Rome came in person to the gate of his own city, the City guarded of God, and rendered up tribute to pagan chieftains. Surely a full-scale disaster would have been a godsend to a chronicler so consciously starved of suitable material" (p. 108–109). In this particular case, "we are confronted not with the silence of one Greek source alone, but with a conspiracy of silence on the part of many" (p. 113). For Dolley as for many others, the silence of the sources is a very important argument against the historicity of the campaign.[139] According to him, "Oleg was a great man and wise ruler, an Eastern Canute" (p. 128). Dolley concludes: "Thus the reconciliation between Kiev and Byzantium was mutually advantageous. Oleg deserves our respect for calling off a war very dear to the Scandinavian heart; Leon for consenting to bargain with a prince whom he could have repelled with contumely" (p. 130).

[137] Mrs. da Costa-Louillet has forgotten the fourth Russian attack on Constantinople in 1043.

[138] *Bulletin de la classe des lettres et des sciences morales et politiques de l'Académie royale de Belgique*, 5th series, XXXV (1949), 106–130.

[139] It is interesting to note that in another article of his, Dolley remarks: "argumenta a silentio" are notoriously fallacious. "A Forgotten Byzantine Conquest of Kypros," *Bulletin de la classe des lettres de l'Académie royale de Belgique*, 5th series, XXXIV (1948), 209.

We see that in his study Dolley does not go as far as Grégoire; he considers Oleg an historical personality, and even has respect for him. He denies the expedition, which, closely following the Russian Annals, he calls "a full-scale disaster" and "a catastrophic irruption" (p. 111). Although I entirely disagree with Dolley concerning the nonhistoricity of Oleg's campaign, I must admit that his paper, as well as Ostrogorsky's above-mentioned study, are the two best contributions to our question, in spite of their diametrically opposite conclusions.

In 1940 the Soviet historian, M. V. Levchenko, calls Oleg's expedition a half-legendary campaign.[140]

SOME REMARKS ON OLEG'S TREATIES

The Russian Chronicle contains the text of the two official documents, the two treaties; a fragment of a treaty under the year 907, and the treaty under the year 911. The first text has often been regarded as a preliminary treaty, and the second text as the final copy of the same treaty. In the latter text we read that "it has often been deemed proper to publish and confirm the amity not merely in words but also in writing and under a firm oath." In this wording we may see an allusion to the previous treaty, which was concluded in 907 with the Emperors Leo and Alexander. Shakhmatov's theory which he advanced in the later years of his life, that Oleg had made only one treaty in 6420 (911), and that the Annalist had transferred some provisions from this treaty into that of 6415 (907), cannot be accepted.[141]

It would be out of place to discuss here in detail the complicated question of those two treaties as has been done in relevant literature. As V. M. Istrin says: "As far as the treaties are concerned only one question arouses no doubts – this is that the treaties have been translated from the Greek; as to the rest, there is no unanimity.[142]

[140] M. V. Levchenko, *History of Byzantium, A Brief Survey* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1940), 160. French edition, M. V. Levtchenko, *Byzance des origines à 1453*. Traduction de Pierre Mabille (Paris, 1949), 184.

[141] A. Shakhmatov, "Some Remarks on the Treaties of Oleg and Igor with the Greeks," *Accounts (Zapiski) of the Neophilological Society at the University of St. Petersburg*, VII (1914), 400. Among the scholars who have accepted this hypothesis, see D. S. Likhachev, *The Russian Annals (Letopisi) and Their Cultural-Historical Significance* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1947), 163. S. Bakhrushin, Review of B. D. Grekov's book, *The Feudal Relations in the Kievan State*, in the magazine *Istorik Marxist*, III (1937), 173. Ostrogorsky rejects this hypothesis, *L'Expédition du Prince Oleg*, p. 53, n. 17. Yet in 1915, D. Meychik called the treaty of 907 "a preliminary agreement, which should be properly ratified." "The Russo-Byzantine Treaties," *Journal of the Ministry of Public Instruction*, June, 1915, p. 361.

[142] V. Istrin, "The Treaties of the Russians with the Greeks," *Izvestiya Otdeleniya Russkogo Yazyka i Slovesnosti*, XXIX (Leningrad, 1924), 382–393. According to Istrin, some obscurity in the text of the treaties depends upon the fact that the Slavonic translations from the Greek

We do not know why the Annalist has not included in his chronicle the complete text of the treaty of 907 instead of only one fragment of the section dealing with the Russians coming to Constantinople, either the Russian merchants coming with merchandise or simple Russian visitors coming without merchandise. But the same chronicle clearly indicates that the treaty contained other provisions, for instance, concerning the tribute to be paid to Oleg upon which the Emperors Leo and Alexander had agreed. As I have pointed out above, the provision, owing to which the Russians had the right to be enlisted for service in the imperial army, also was included, in all probability, in this treaty. Then both contracting parties bound themselves by oath to make peace and faithfully keep the conditions of the treaty. As the Russian Chronicle narrates: "After agreeing upon the tribute and mutually binding themselves by oath, the Emperors Leo and Alexander kissed the cross, and invited Oleg and his men to swear an oath likewise. According to the religion of the Russes, the latter swore by their weapons and by their god Perun, as well as by Volos, the god of cattle and thus confirmed the treaty." [143] This was the formal treaty which put an end to Oleg's raid. After the conclusion of the treaty Oleg immediately returned to Kiev.

All the favorable conditions which were granted Oleg by the Emperors in 907 may be clearly explained by the general difficult situation of the Empire both in the east, in its relations towards the Arabs, as well as in the internal life of the Empire. In the east the unfinished negotiations with the Arabs concerning an exchange of the prisoners of war; the defection of one of the very prominent generals, Andronicus Ducas, who had fled to the Arabs in February–March of 907,[144] and, following his flight, the complications on the eastern border; the maritime expedition of Himerius who in 906 invaded Cyprus, so that the Byzantine Navy was removed from Constantinople and rather heavily committed in the Mediterranean – all these facts strongly preoccupied the attention of the government.

On the other hand, the internal complications connected with the ques-

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copies were made only in the eleventh century, during the time of Yaroslav the Wise, but the authentic Slavonic texts have disappeared. Referring to this question, S. Cross remarks: "There appears, in the main, to be very little probability that a translation of each of these treaties was made into either Norse or Old Russian at the time of their negotiation, though the presence of Bulgarian interpreters in Constantinople during the tenth century is not unlikely." S. Cross, *The Russian Primary Chronicle*, p. 104, n. 1.

[143] See above, p. 169.

[144] According to M. Canard, the beginning of Andronicus Ducas' rebellion took place in the autumn of 905. "Deux épisodes des relations diplomatiques arabo-byzantines au X^{e} siècle," *Bulletin d'Etudes Orientales de l'Institut Français de Damas*, XIII (1949–1950), p. 55; the whole article, pp. 51–69.

tion of Leo's fourth marriage created a very tense atmosphere not only in Constantinople but in the Empire in general. The affair of the tetragamy led Leo to the violent conflict with the Patriarch Nicholas Mysticus. In January, 906, the infant Constantine, the future Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus, Leo's child by his mistress Zoë Carbonopsina, was baptized in St. Sophia, and a few days later Leo, with his own hands, crowned Zoë as the Empress. In February, 907, the unyielding Patriarch was deposed, and Leo married Zoë. All these circumstances, which took place just during Oleg's raid, made the Emperors Leo and Alexander desire to obtain a speedy peace with the Russians and to see Oleg and his Viking companions depart from Constantinople as soon as possible.

The Chronicle fails to contain the complete text of the second treaty, reproducing only a very lengthy excerpt of it dealing with the stipulations concerning various damages and incidents occurring between Russians and Greeks; but apparently some clauses of the treaty of 907 have been included in the text of the later treaty, and the Chronicler did not want to repeat them.

The second treaty which was made by Oleg's envoys is very important. It supplies us with its exact dating, which is indicated not only by the year from Creation, 6420, which might be equivocal, 911 or 912, but is fixed with absolute certainty by the mention of the month of September, by the indiction, as well as by the mention of the names of the three Emperors, Leo, Alexander, and Constantine. Since, as we know, Leo VI died on May 11, 912, and the child Constantine was crowned on June 9, 911, for the dating of the treaty there remains only September, 911.[145]

Then this treaty clearly shows that it was concluded after a conflict with the Russians. We read: "Thus first of all, let us make peace with you Greeks" (Po pervomu ubo slovu da umirimsya s vami Greky). In spite of the assertion of some scholars that there is no trace in the text of any hostilities preceding this treaty, I am certain that the above statement means that the

[145] The Annals state that the treaty was concluded "in the month of September in 2." Most of the scholars understood this indication as "the second of September." But see, for instance, F. Dölger, *Regesten von 565–1025* (München-Berlin, 1924), pp. 66–67, No. 556: 911, September 8–14. According to his own calculation, A. Kunik defines the dating of the treaty: Sunday, September 22, 911. *Letopis of the Works of the Archaeographical Commission, the Years, 1888–1894*, XI (St. Petersburg, 1903), 12 b. So far as chronology is concerned, the entire Laurential redaction of the Annals, down to the year 6813, is dated by the so-called March years, i.e., with the years which began with the first of March. See N. V. Stepanov, "The Count of Time (Yedinitzy scheta vremeni), down to the Thirteenth Century, according to the Laurentian and the First Novgorod Annals," *Chteniya of the Moscow Society of Russian History and Antiquities at the University of Moscow*, 1909, no. 4, 65. *Idem*, "The Calendar-Chronological Reference Book (Spravochnik)," *ibidem*, 1917, no. 1. The March year seems to have been accepted in the first years of Christianity in Russia.

treaty was made shortly after a military conflict, when Oleg was already at Kiev. Since we regard the treaty of 907 as a final treaty which put an end to Oleg's raid, and the treaty of 911 as another final treaty, we must admit that some violation of the first treaty must have occurred during the four years separating the two treaties. In all probability, it was another Russian piratical raid upon one of the coastal regions of the Empire or upon the neighborhood of Constantinople.

Since only four years had elapsed after the first treaty, and since the Russian raids as piratical incursions failed to have introduced any important changes of general character, the Russian envoys were commanded to take as a basis for the text of the new treaty that of the previous treaty which Oleg had concluded with the Emperors Leo and Alexander in 907.

Saying this, I deviate a little from the famous study of N. A. Lavrovsky *On the Byzantine Element in the Language of the Treaties of the Russians with the Greeks* (St. Petersburg, 1853), who in the statement of the Chronicle "ravno drugogo sveschaniya" has ingeniously discovered, in the Slavonic word *ravno*, the Greek word τὸ ἴσον in the sense of "a copy," so that the text of the second treaty was the copy of the agreement of 907. In my opinion, the second treaty was not a copy of the previous agreement, but it was compiled on its basis. Due to a very short time lying between the two treaties, and due to the uniform character of piratical raids, there could not be many essential changes in the contents of the new treaty, so that some clauses of this treaty must have been identical with those of the first treaty; in other words, they may be called a copy — ἴσον — of the previous document. But as a whole, the text of the second treaty is a special document of its own.[146]

Both documents are very reliable evidence for proving the historicity of Oleg's successful raid on Constantinople.

For us it is a question of secondary importance whether the treaty of 911 was ratified by the Russian Prince or not. Dimitriu writes that in all

[146] Surprisingly enough, in his English rendering of the Chronicle, Cross omitted this very important passage: "glagolya ravno drugogo sveschaniya pri tech je Tsarikh Lva i Alexandra." Instead of this, he writes, "his envoys thus made declaration" (p. 151). In his French translation, L. Leger, in my opinion, correctly understood this statement, saying: "Oleg leur recommanda de prendre pour base la convention qu'il avait conclue avec les empereurs Léon et Alexandre." *Chronique dite de Nestor*, trad. par Louis Leger (Paris, 1884), 25. Publications de l'École des langues orientales vivantes, II[e] série, vol. XIII. In his German rendering of the Chronicle, R. Trautmann translates this passage as follows: "Im Jahre 6420 Oleg sandte seine Mannen, um Frieden zu machen und einen Vertrag zwischen Russen und Griechen abzuschliessen und sandte hin, indem er sagen liess: Abschrift des Freundschaftsvertrages, der unter den Kaisern Leon und Alexandros abgeschlossen wurde," *Die altrussische Nestorchronik* (Leipzig, 1931), p. 19.

probability Oleg had no time to ratify the treaty, because the Russian Chronicler tells about Oleg's death immediately after the conclusion of the treaty; and that it is very possible that Igor refused to ratify it.[147] According to Lyaschenko, the treaty of 911 was almost exclusively in favor of the Greeks.[148]

THE COMET OF 912

Under the year 911 (6419) the Russian Annals have a brief record: "A great star appeared in the West in the form of a spear." According to the best authorities on the Annals, "the Russian chronicler took this information from the Continuer of George Hamartolus but he abridged the Greek text, which he used in its old Slavonic version. This Greek chronicler says: "during the time of (the Emperor Alexander) a star wearing a tail (comet) appeared in the west; the men who are versed in this (phenomenon) called it spear-shaped (sword-shaped). They said that it foreboded bloodshed in Constantinople." [149]

Thus, according to the Greek sources, this comet appeared during the reign of Alexander (May 11, 912–June 6, 913).

It was the famous Halley's comet, named for the English astronomer Edmund Halley (1656–1742), who defined the period of its appearance. In Byzantium this comet was seen in 912, during the reign of the Emperor Alexander.[150]

[147] A. Dimitriu, "Upon the Question of the Treaties of the Russians with the Greeks," *Viz. Vremennik*, II (1895), 545. Dölger remarks, referring to Dimitriu's article, that after the analogy with the later privileges granted Venice, Genoa, and others, this is quite possible. F. Dölger, *Regesten*, I (München und Berlin, 1924), No. 556 (p. 67).

[148] A. Lyaschenko, "The Annalistic Tales about the Death of Oleg the Wise," *Izvestiya Otdeleniya Russkogo Yazyka i Slovesnosti Rossiyskoy Akademii Nauk*, XXIX (1924), p. 286. He refers to the above-mentioned articles of Dimitriu and Meychik.

[149] Ἐπὶ τούτου ἀστὴρ ἐφάνη κομίτης ἐκ δύσεως· ξιφίαν δὲ αὐτὸν ἐκάλουν οἱ περὶ ταῦτα δεινοί, ὃν αἱμάτων χύσιν προσημαίνειν ἐν τῇ πόλει γενέσθαι ἔφασαν. *Georgii Monachi Chronicon*, ed. E. Muralt (St. Petersburg, 1859), 797. V. M. Istrin, *The Chronicle of George Hamartolus in an Old Slavo-Russian Version*, II (Petrograd, 1922), 38, 12–14. *The Old Slavonic version*, I (Petrograd, 1920), 541. See also Theophanes Continuatus, 379. Pseudo-Symeon Magister, 716 (the comet was visible for forty days). Cedrenus, II, 276. Michaelis Glycae Annales, 557. The old Slavonic version gives for οἱ δεινοί the original meaning of the word δεινός — *zlii* — wicked, fearful, dire.

[150] See K. Pokrovsky, "The Comets in the Russian Annals," in the magazine *Mir Bojiy* (St. Petersburg, April, 1903), 238; the whole article, 235–256. D. O. Svyatsky, "The Astronomical Phenomena in the Russian Annals from the Scientific-Critical Point of View, chapter III, The Comets," *Izvestiya Otdeleniya Russkaro Yazyka i Slovesnosti Akademii Nauk*, XX, book 2 (Petrograd, 1915), 198, 202; the whole study, 197–242. A. Lyaschenko, "The Annalistic Tales about the Death of Oleg the Wise," *ibidem*, XXIX (1924), 255–256; the whole study, 254–288. I do not know why Shakhmatov positively states that "in reality the comet appeared in 913." "The Chronology of the Oldest Russian Annalistic Redactions," *Journal of the Ministry of Public Instruction*, April, 1897, p. 472; the whole article, pp. 463–482.

If the Russian Annalist took his record from the Byzantine Chronicles, which refer the appearance of the comet to the reign of Alexander (912–913), the question arises why he mentioned it under 911. We know that, according to popular superstition, the appearance of a comet always augurs some coming evils and misfortunes. We see that, according to Byzantine sources, the comet of 912 foreboded bloodshed in Constantinople. Therefore if we infer that the Annalist knew the time of Alexander's reign, one may suppose that he inserted the appearance of the comet under the year 911 intentionally, having in view the Russian raid which had been accompanied by bloodshed and which had preceded the conclusion of the treaty of 911.

CONCLUSION

Oleg's campaign or Oleg's raid is an historical fact; it was not invented by the Russian chronicler but was lavishly adorned by him with legendary trimmings which, for the most part, may be explained and understood through Scandinavian realities. It must be studied and discussed in connection with those harassing attacks to which the northern coasts of Asia Minor were accustomed in the ninth and tenth centuries, and which are comparable to the Viking raids against Western Europe. Owing to Oleg's personal participation in this particular undertaking, the latter may be called "the raid on a large scale." But it cannot be designated as "a full-scale disaster" (Dolley, 109), "a catastrophic irruption" (*idem*, 111), or "a devastation of Tsargrad" itself (Tiander, 233). Even the Russian chronicler himself, in spite of his exaggerations, states that Oleg's soldiers "waged war *around* the city" only, and his ships upon wheels "spread their sails and bore down *towards* the city."

Oleg's raid is to be considered also as one of the episodes of the Varyago-Slavonic inroads southwards, to the shores of the Black Sea, and owing to the decline of the Khazar State, southeast, to the shores of the Caspian Sea, which were so spectacular in the tenth century.

Oleg's name was unknown to the Byzantine sources. For the first time it has occurred in the texts of the treaties; but their text, as we know, has survived only in Old-Slavonic. But Masudi knew the name. During his travels along the shores of the Caspian, he heard Oleg's name from the Vikings and Slavs, who at that time were fighting there, and he knew it in the Slavonic form "Oleg."

Of course, the conclusion of the scholars who deny the historicity of Oleg's campaign has nothing to do with its "unpalatability to Russia's mili-

tant imperialism" (Dolley, 100), with "a slander to the genius of the Russian people" (*idem*, 129), or with "a popular ballad intended to flatter the national *amour propre*" (Baumgarten, 39).

Oleg's campaign is a simple historical episode which must be considered against the background of general conditions of that time. Stripped of its imaginary grandeur and brilliancy and deprived of legendary embellishments, Oleg's "raid on a large scale" is portrayed by the Russian chronicler in agreement with the actual possibilities and the Viking impulses of the young Russian State, as well as in full agreement with the general European tragic situation of that period.